

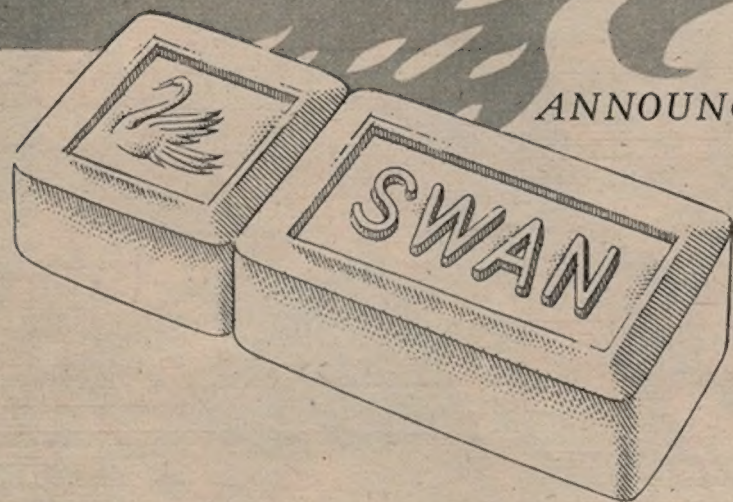
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EDITORIAL

Summer is the time to face the winter coal problem

ORDINARY PEOPLE ARE APT to be a bit bewildered by the coal situation.

They have not found it easy to understand the new price plan for house coals. This makes it better to "stockpile" coal now, in the summer, and is one of the most sensible "fair share and fair price" measures yet taken. It seems complicated only because it fixes basic prices according to how far the customer lives from the coalfields, and then adds or subtracts fixed amounts according to the time of year; less in summer, more in winter. But it does reduce to eight the number of different grades of coal, so that every housewife should know what to expect for her money.

Many people, distracted, perhaps, by their examination of the new system, may not have noticed some recent forceful arguments about how the industry itself ought to be re-organized. Coal is a winter problem that can be solved by clear thinking in the summer—clear thinking by home and industrial users and by those who control our coalfields.

Changes may soon be made which will be of key importance to everyone who burns coal. The Government, for example, is planning changes in the National Coal Board for when the present chiefs' contracts expire this month. And the Parliamentary Opposition has a rival plan to "decentralize" control of the industry.

One main consideration really counts with ordinary folk: "Shall we get enough coal?" So it is worth knowing something about these background moves.

Nor too much must be expected from any of them. Elaborate plans have been canvassed. They in themselves imply that all is not well with the industry; but they do nothing practical towards putting it right.

Coal production depends on having enough skilled men working enough of the right machines at the face down the pit. Nothing else will fill scuttles—and keep them full!

At present the industry is administered, under the National Coal Board, by nine divisional boards and forty-eight general managers of areas. That was the original set-up under nationalisation, and the Government will not hurriedly scrap it. But the Government's political opponents propose, on the advice of Colonel C. G. Lancaster, M.P., the

former coalowner, Sir Charles Reid, author of the famous report on coal, and other experts, to substitute thirty district coal boards on the theory that localized management will make everyone concerned more efficient and enthusiastic.

It is questionable whether the working miner, on whom everything depends, will care whether his work is mapped out for him by thirty boards or by nine boards and forty-eight general managers. He is more concerned with his own weekly earnings—with the daily conditions in his own particular colliery and his relations with the man who runs it.

COLLIERY managers are the key men. If they are well chosen, capable, tactful, not overburdened with paper work, and are given a fair chance by the central administration's policy to be friendly with their men, they will hold their staffs and be able to recruit more.

In fact, there seems very little point in juggling with the Coal Board and its ramifying sub-boards and committees. To do so might even affect the efficiency of an organization which is now beginning to function briskly after several difficult years.

Not enough coal for *all* needs is being raised. But impatience is not necessarily the best counsellor—and it must be remembered that the nation's consumption has greatly increased.

The national plan for coal will, in any case, take at least ten years to complete, with its new pits, modernization of others and mechanization of all. Big changes in the industry's overhead structure now could make the plan more difficult to carry out, and would certainly delay it.

Let's concentrate on two things—getting more miners to work on the one hand and saving more fuel on the other.

We need an intensified campaign for fuel economy, not by restrictions on unnecessary use, but by cutting out waste.

The Fuel Ministry is doing a good job in its propaganda to the home consumer. It could do still more by setting out to check the colossal wastage in obsolete factories. It has been said officially that an unskilled stoker can burn more fuel unnecessarily than a miner produces in the same time at the face.

Recruitment and economy should be the dominant aims, to be pursued in freedom from the threat of political earthquakes. Otherwise we shall be heading straight for yet another fuel crisis next winter.



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If you have yet to try 'Ovaltine' Cold . . . don't delay the happy experience. It is made in a twink! . . . Just add 'Ovaltine' to cold milk, or milk and water, and mix with a whisk—or in a shaker.

Remember that light summer meals are seldom sufficiently nourishing to replace the energy you spend so freely. A glass of cold 'Ovaltine' makes the lightest meal much more nourishing and revitalizing.

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FREE SPEECH

Holidaymakers abroad who down Britain

MY HUSBAND AND I have just spent a short holiday on the Continent and were disgusted with some of our fellow tourists, who were continually trying to give foreigners the idea that "Britain is down the drain"—to quote one man we encountered in Switzerland. Quite often we found ourselves having to deny completely untrue stories spread by these people.

It would do some of our "moaners" good if they had to work the long hours which are usual in many places on the Continent.—MRS. M. J., Shropshire.

Dangerous Trio



Black Bryony



White Bryony



Woody Nightshade

ANY LIST of attractive-looking but dangerous hedge plants whose berries children should be warned against sampling ("Now You Know," June 23) would be incomplete without these three: Woody Nightshade (purple flowers, scarlet berries), Black Bryony (greenish flowers, scarlet berries) and White Bryony (yellowish green flowers and orange berries).—J. W. WATSON, The Lodge, Abbey Park, Leicester.

Trinder, Boy Scout

KEITH ELLIS'S ARTICLE on Tommy Trinder (JOHN BULL, June 23) showed how Tommy became a star, but the real secret of his success is that he is a born comic. My husband was in the same London scout troop as Tommy at St. Andrew's, Holborn, and he has told me how the boys were always telling Tommy he should go on the stage. My mother-in-law has a picture of Tommy taken in the scout troop, and he seems to have altered very little.—MRS. D. C. MINNS, 6/28 Cathcart Hill, London, N.19.

... Reading about Trinder reminded me of the times I have seen him, and many others who are now famous, in travelling revue. So many stars served their apprenticeship the hard way, and the provinces gave them every encouragement. What a fine gesture it would be if some of these famous stars combined for a "Thank You" tour of the towns where they are now seldom seen.—C. GERTEN, 20 Longden Avenue, Huddersfield.

Junior Fashions

DO MOTHERS CODDLE their sons by making them wear too many clothes, asks Mrs. G. O. M. Jones ("Free

Speech," June 23). I don't for one, yet my son wears everything, hat as well, even in the hottest weather. On the other hand, my daughter wears hardly anything and scorns gloves, even when it is really cold.—MRS. N. STAMFORD, 30 Langdale Gardens, Western Avenue, Perivale, Middlesex.

... There are fashions, even in the infants' school. Woe betide the boy in a blouse and pullover among two or three dozen "windjammers."—MARY GREENWOOD, 23 South Cabtril Avenue, Liverpool.

... A headmistress of a mixed school once told me the girls would take practically everything off in a gym class, whereas it was impossible to get a boy to remove even his tie.—MRS. F. L. GILL, 15 Royston Avenue, Wallington, Surrey.

... Boys are not coddled. At my school, rugby and hockey are played in any weather and boys go for long runs clad only in flimsy clothing. It seems that at a girls' school hot water bottles are a necessity, and if the weather is rainy or cold no games take place. Boys lead much more spartan lives.—SCHOOLBOY, Kent.

Festival Escort

RECENTLY, I TRAVELLED to London, with fifteen pupils from the school at which I teach, to visit the Festival. For two days and one night, I had full responsibility for the children—continually counting them at all exits, seeing them safely across busy streets. For these pleasures I had to pay a substantial part of the expenses incurred. I do not complain of this, but I did feel annoyed to overhear two women speaking derogatively of "these teachers who get cheap trips to London."—W. H., Manchester.

Operation Dandelion

BEING AN EQUALLY TIRED A.C.I., may I badd my voice to that of "Tired Rookie" who complained ("Free Speech," June 23) about being made to pick dandelions around his Army camp. Air Force officers seem to have a weakness for white paint, and we often see groups of men with pots of paint being marched around and made to splash it haphazardly on everything paintable in sight. It's infuriating to spend our time humouring the whims of officialdom.—A.C.I.

... Some people have the wrong slant on Army life. During my service

I was often made to do apparently useless things, like polishing boot studs and scraping clean the lids of shoe polish tins. There is an aim behind orders of this kind: to instil a sense of obedience, even to orders for which there seems to be no good reason. This is an important factor when a unit is in action.—EX-NATIONAL SERVICEMAN.

Hoarded The Empties

WE HAVE JUST MOVED into a house and have found thirteen sacks of old papers (some of them dating back to 1925), seventeen tea chests, baths, buckets, barrels and suitcases, all crammed with jam jars, milk bottles, beer bottles, medicine bottles, plus old clothes, mats and other discarded articles. When will the Government take action against hoarders? —MRS. L. V., Bristol.

A Breath Of Air

NON-SMOKERS HAVE "No Smoking" compartments on trains and, as one who suffers from that mild form of claustrophobia which requires an open



window, I suggest that "Open Window" compartments, too, should be introduced. And there should, of course, be "No Smoking, Open Window" compartments as well.—D. W. EASTOE, Hoselands Hill, Hartley, Dartford, Kent.

War On A Nest

IT IS NOT ONLY CHILDREN who destroy birds' nests. Last week, a neighbour borrowed my garden rake. When I went to fetch it back, she showed me a broken blue-tit's nest and, pointing to five little dead birds, exclaimed: "Aren't they mischievous little things? I had quite a job getting the nest down from our tree."—MRS. M. WHITAKER, Middlesex.

Ordered To The Pigs

LETTERS IN "FREE SPEECH" about the Lprefix "Mr." bring to mind my experience in the Land Army. One morning, the men farmhands and I were waiting for the day's instructions. "Smith, do this. Brown, go there," ordered the farmer, sergeant-major fashion. Then, turning to me, he said: "Harrison, go to the pigs." I went on admiring the scenery. "Harrison," he shouted, "did you hear me?" I replied: "There's a 'Miss' in front of my name, or, if you prefer it, I have a Christian name." Next morning, the farmer greeted us with a bright "Good morning, all," addressed each of the men "Mr." and to me said: "Miss Harrison, will you please see to the pigs?"—MRS. R. COURTNEY, Manchester.

Life's Essentials

FOR THREE AND A HALF YEARS I was held by the Japanese as a prisoner of war, and, like the reader who recently left a sanatorium ("Free Speech," June 23), I am astonished at the things some people in this postwar world consider "essential." My diet as a p.o.w. was a few ounces of rice per day and my wardrobe was a tattered pair of shorts. Consequently, I am somewhat sceptical when I hear someone grumbling that life is impossible without a car or a television set.—B. G. C., South Queensferry, Scotland.

John Bull welcomes readers' views, experiences and ideas for publication. A guinea is paid for every letter used. Mark the envelope "Free Speech" and make sure your full name and address are in the letter.

THIS WEEK'S COVER



DOUGLAS L. MAYS, who has painted nearly fifty JOHN BULL covers, calls this picture "Come on in, Auntie." But Auntie has decided to join the up-to-the-knees-only brigade. What a good thing it was that she "forgot" to pack her bathing costume!

*"This film-star look was easy
with my new home perm"*



... soft, natural-looking waves with Pin-Up, at a fraction of the cost of an expensive perm

THERESA GILL, London typist, has a sparkle these days in her pretty blue eyes. "Here's why," says Theresa. "After seeing a picture of Jane Hylton I thought I might do my hair the same way. But my hair had none of that lovely 'natural' look. Then I read that Jane's perm was a Pin-Up, so I decided to give myself one. It was easy as anything, and the results were astonishing. My hair really *did* look like a film star's. No more expensive perms for me. It's Pin-Up from now on!"

JANE HYLTON, brilliant young star of "OUT OF TRUE," says: "I'm always thrilled with the results of my Pin-Up. The waves are so soft and easy to manage, and they look so marvellously natural."

Now, no other perm so fast yet so safe as Pin-Up

IN the entire Pin-Up range waving time has now been reduced by one hour. But because Pin-Up is so safe you can leave the waving lotion on after the wave is formed—all night if more convenient.

Pin-Up possesses the unique advantage of requiring no test curls with normal hair. Because there is no clock-watching, you can get on with other jobs while the wave is forming.

All the loveliest young stars, like Jane Hylton, insist on Pin-Up because they know that they can count on perfect results—soft, glossy, really natural-looking waves. Make your next perm a Pin-Up.

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such a change
in a man!*

"I forgot to tell you—I ran into my old Company Commander about three months ago. Hadn't seen him since the war."

"I remember him. How was he?"

"Very much under the weather. Looked tired and irritable—said he had no appetite, no energy, and hardly knew how to drag himself about."

"Well, you know what he should do

about that. Did you tell him?"

"Not only did I tell him. I hauled him into a chemist's and made him buy a large bottle of Phyllosan tablets right away."

"Have you seen him since?"

"Yes, today. But he saw me first. Slapped me on the back with such enthusiasm he almost bowled me over. Never saw such a change in a man. He's a Phyllosan 'fan' for life now!"

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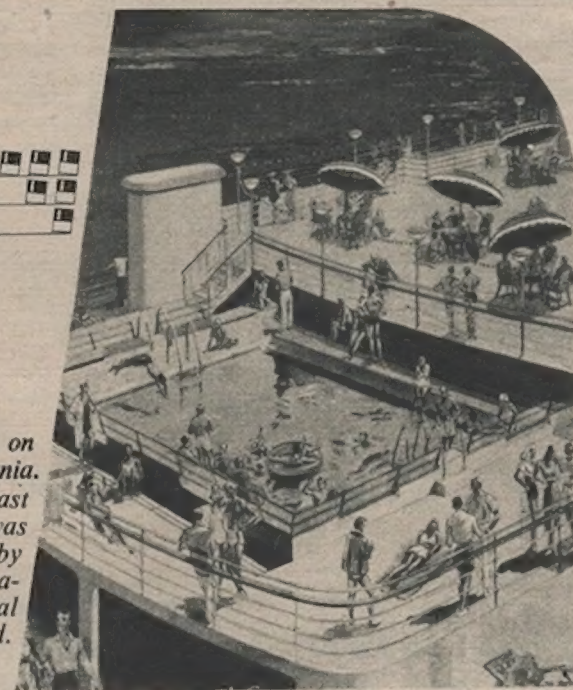
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She was sitting by the cradle, just looking at the baby. There was a peculiar soft look on her face. I thought maybe she was still half asleep

What girls are for

by *FRANK O'CONNOR*

ILLUSTRATED BY BARBARA SCHWINN

Can anyone answer a simple question—why were girls born? They're useless

and a nightmare in the home. Take my sister Biddy, and the life she led me . . .

FOR YEARS I couldn't see what God intended girls for at all. They struck me as the most useless articles and a real nightmare in the home. The way they went on about their old frocks and their silly dolls disgusted me. There was my sister, Biddy, for instance. She was more than a year younger than I was. Nothing worried her. She maundered round the house like a half-idiot, humming to herself, having forgotten whatever it was she was looking for.

You couldn't send her on a message because she forgot what it was the moment she was outside the door, and a quarter of an hour afterwards you found her playing down the avenue with the money in the pocket of her pinafore and the hair hanging down over her right eye. Then she would brush back the hair as if it was the cobweb on her brain and say: "Oh, I forgot."

Sometimes I thought that she wasn't half

the fool she let on to be. Because, of course, I came in for most of the errands. I had to pay for having a head on me. As if I hadn't responsibilities enough as Chief Gang Leader!

She couldn't even understand why I should be Chief Gang Leader. According to her, there was no necessity for it, and no honour in having the job. To her the avenue where she played hopscotch with the Daly kids was only just an avenue like any other, but to me, the bend in it was no man's land, a place I had to approach carefully, and the corner by the gas lamp the frontier of our gang territory and the scene of endless desperate battles with the Tram Terrace kids, who were kept out of the avenue at all only by dread of our Corner Patrol.

While I worried myself sick about how I was to keep up the Corner Patrol, she went home and reported that I was playing with the Hendrick children. Of course, I wasn't playing with them; I didn't even like them. But what could

you do with mothers and fathers that kept their sons in at night to do homework instead of letting them out on patrol? If the patrol broke down, little chance the Dalys or Biddy would have had of playing hopscotch in the avenue. The Tram Terrace kids—a ferocious gang!—would have seen to that.

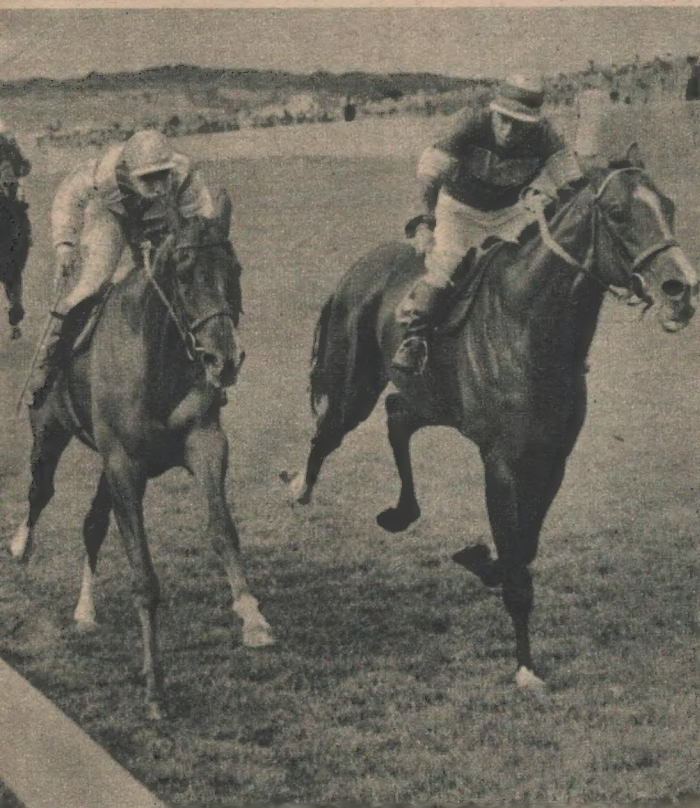
I broke her of the spying by getting the whole gang to torture her one night. She went screeching to father—she had a special screech for father's benefit that he could hear from the end of the avenue—and I got a good hiding, but after that she left the gang alone. As I told her: "A torture is worse than a good hiding any day."

She had no idea—nobody who hasn't been in the position himself could have any idea—of the worry and expense of being Chief Gang Leader. We got a penny a week—twopence if we were lucky—and any Chief Gang Leader will tell you

Continued on page 24



Master and pupil, 1932: Steve Donoghue (left) congratulates young Gordon on his 100th win of the season. Steve was Gordon's hero. "He gave me all the teaching I ever had," he says



Master and pupil, 1950: Gordon (on Denizen) pips Lester Piggott to the post. Gordon often gives tips to the "wonder boy" jockey. Piggott in return calls him "granddad" — but listens

How Gordon Richards rode to fame

by ROBERT JACKSON

No story of the turf is as exciting as that of Gordon Richards, miner's son who rode his way to fortune. It is a story rich with highlights: of his boyhood meeting with Steve Donoghue, of the drama of the record-breaking year he rode to the top, of disastrous spills and spectacular finishes

ONE BY ONE, THE JOCKEYS are returning from the racecourse to the weighing-in room, with saddles under their arms and sweat pitted on their lined and leathery faces. Inside, in the opulent, mixed smell of the stable and the rich man's club, pint-sized, stocky, aggressive men with household names—Smirke, Carr, Rickaby, the brothers Smith, Elliott, Gethin, Britt and a dozen others—begin to hold a private inquest on the race.

Tempers rise, accusations about riding are made and flung back angrily. Amid the noise, a silent man with a quizzical smile drops lightly from the scales and pushes through the changing-room. Even Gordon Richards, champion jockey for most of twenty-five years, has to push. He takes the youngest jockey, Lester Piggott, by the arm and leads him to the quietest corner.

"Now, Lester," says Gordon Richards, wagging his finger and speaking loudly to make sure the deaf "wonder boy" hears, "if you'd begun your run twenty yards earlier, you'd have won that race from me. You ought to have done. Don't try to ride too cleverly in future."

Young Lester Piggott told me the story himself and says it happens often. Gordon Richards would never have mentioned it because, after all his years as champion jockey, he is still the smallest, quietest, least boastful giant the Sport of Kings has known this century. Earlier that race day, when the jockeys were manoeuvring for position at the starter's gate, Gordon had mildly reproved the boy for carelessness. "Okay, granddad," quipped young Piggott. The other jockeys smiled and Gordon smiled with them.

More Than 20,000 Races

At forty-seven, the jockey who has broken more track records than any other has ever done is not a grandfather yet. But several years before young Piggott was born, Gordon had made a habit of writing his name in the record books of the turf. "I suppose I've ridden in well over 20,000 races in my life," says Gordon. "Out of all that lot, I've had getting on for 4,250 winners."

Fame, the sort of fame that will last as long as men breed and race horses, settled permanently on this wiry, black-haired master of the many-sided art of riding winners, as long ago as 1933. Already he had been six times champion jockey and, but for accident and illness, might have been champion for two other years. He held five of the richest retainers in racing, including agreements to ride for Fred Darling's famous Beckhampton stable and for his old boss and friend, the "Guv'nor," Martin Hartigan.

It was Gordon's twelfth season as a full-blown jockey and he was riding confidently, like a great champion approaching his zenith. His star was higher than that of another riding wizard, Steve

Donoghue, to whom he owed so much for kindness and instruction. If a jockey can ride a hundred winners by the end of August, he is doing very well indeed, even when he has several mounts every raceday. Gordon had ridden his hundred in 1933 by the end of June. He was beginning to wonder whether he would achieve his ambition of riding 200 winners in the season.

The bookies could never remember such a year. They christened Gordon "our nightmare." Four wins at Warwick on September 19 brought Gordon's total up to his previous season's of 190. Barring accidents, the 200 mark was now almost in his pocket, and it began to dawn on the little man that another, more fabulous, record might be within his reach.

Punters Won Small Fortunes

"It had never entered my mind until then to beat Fred Archer's record of 246 winners in a season," said Gordon. "But I should be tickled to death if I did so." The task was by no means simple, even for such a jockey as Gordon: to ride just over a winner a day, or fifty-seven in fifty-two days.

The rest of the month, Gordon kept his winning form. The bookies faced each day's racing with foreboding. They did not much mind losing single bets on many of his mounts because the prices were often artificially short, but the small punters were in the habit of backing his mounts in crossed doubles and winning small fortunes. To save what remained in their satchels, many bookies refused to pay more than three to one whenever Gordon rode a horse. That had happened only twice before in turf history—once with Fred Archer and once with the American jockey, Tod Sloan.

At Chepstow, one of his favourite courses, he rode every winner on the card. Fred Archer had ridden six winners in a day before, but on the day he did so there were seven races. A punter who had a £5 accumulator on all Gordon's mounts took home £467. The day before that, Richards had ridden the winner of the last race and the following day, also at Chepstow, the champion added another five to make it twelve in a row. The crowd at the pretty country course went crazy. A punter pushed up to Gordon as he rode his horse into the winner's enclosure after the fifth race. Seizing his hand, the punter shook it warmly. "You're the greatest benefactor the public has ever had," he said.

But an even louder cheer greeted Gordon on the last race of the day. At the starting gate, the other gloomy jockeys ribbed the starter, Major Kenneth Robertson. "We can't beat him fairly, major," they said. "Give us a chance and leave him behind."

"Keep on trying, jockeys," smiled the starter, releasing the gate. As usual, Gordon on the hot



Gordon Richards this season. At Alexandra Park, his lucky track, he brings home Leica

favourite, Eagleray, was well away, but two outsiders beat him narrowly into third place. The cheers rose loud and long—this time from the battered bookies.

The season was drawing to a close and Gordon was still in form. At a two-day meeting at Worcester, he rode four winners on the first day. One more winner would have made a shining new record. The town authorities, set to make the most of a memorable occasion, planned a civic reception for the great little jockey. The winner eluded Gordon. They held the reception all the same and in extravagant language sang his praises. But Gordon went home uneasy and irritable. He scowled at the photographers prowling round his house next morning waiting to steal a picture.

Day He Broke The Record

Off he flew to Thirsk in Yorkshire, on a black, rainy day. Crowds from all over the north of England gathered to cheer him on. Nearly a hundred reporters and photographers were there to record the great occasion. But out of five mounts, the now unhappy jockey did not ride a single winner.

Critics, sensing an anti-climax, began to say that Gordon had lost his touch and that Archer's record would stand, after all. But soon after, at Hurst Park, in the second race, on a horse called El Señor, Richards rode his 246th victory. The police had to be called in to protect him on the journey from the unsaddling enclosure to the weighing-room. Four days later, on the anniversary of Fred Archer's suicide, he won again

on Golden King at Liverpool. Pale and trembling, Richards dismounted amid the enthusiastic spectators. "Thank goodness it's over," he mumbled, gathering up the saddle. "You don't know what a load is off my mind."

A record set up by the world's greatest jockey, which had stood for nearly fifty years, had tumbled. The King, who had followed Gordon's riding all through the season with the keenest interest, wired his congratulations on a "splendid achievement." Gordon was touched and happy, but in his hour of triumph he did not forget the jockey whose record he had beaten. "Conditions have changed since Archer rode," said Gordon, "but I think, personally, that Archer would have held his own with the best of us." And, refusing to attend a banquet, he went off with his old friend Steve Donoghue to a supper of sausages and mash and beer.

Richards was not yet thirty, a well-built little man with broad shoulders and a perky strut, who, looking ahead, thought he might have ten more seasons as England's champion jockey. "After all, Steve was riding when he was over fifty," Gordon argued. Actually, Gordon has remained the champion jockey ever since, apart from 1941, when he broke his leg early in the season.

Glancing backwards, Gordon could remember the unpromising start of the Richards success story. He was one of a miner's family of seven slight, black-haired, quick-tempered children who were brought up in the dreary Shropshire mining village of Wrockwardine Wood, near Oakengates.

"Not much of a place," says Gordon, philosophically, recalling his early days. "If I hadn't

become a jockey, I should have gone down the pit, like my father. Well, that's not a bad life either, if you're used to it—and I was."

Pit ponies, fattening in the fields around the village after a spell underground, gave Gordon his first love of horses. With his brother Cliff, who is still a successful jockey, Gordon had passionate squabbles over the best mounts. His sister, Rhoda, recalls that the two boys were selfish about this. "Gordon worst of all," she says, although in every other way "he had a fine, generous disposition."

When he was fourteen, Gordon's father put him to work in the pit warehouse, checking lamps, props, picks, cables and other items of mining equipment. Martin Hartigan, the famous trainer at Foxhill, near Ogbourne in Wiltshire, saved him from that. On the strength of his experience with pit ponies, Hartigan took him on as an apprentice. He did not know that Gordon and two girls who worked in the warehouse office had sweated for hours over the wording of the application.

Meeting That Changed His Life

At Foxhill, two things happened that had a profound influence on the life of young Richards. He learned his job as a horseman; and he met his lifelong idol, Steve Donoghue. "Steve was the first jockey of the stable," says Gordon, speaking softly, almost affectionately of the old days. "He was there when I had my first ride on a racehorse. He was a masterly jockey and a wonderful fellow. Steve gave me all the teaching I ever had."

The first real racehorse Gordon ever rode ran away with him, although even as a puny boy, Gordon had plenty of strength. It happened afterwards again on occasions but not very often. Gordon learned fast. On Donoghue's advice, the trainer Hartigan watched how competently and fearlessly Richards began to handle horses at exercise; he gave Gordon his first ride on a racecourse when he was sixteen. It was an inauspicious beginning and only Gordon now recalls it. The horse's name was Clockwork and it finished, ticking very slowly, in the tail of the field at Lingfield.

As he grew to manhood, Gordon's increasing weight caused him concern. He thought, foolishly as it turned out, that it might affect his career and he began to take long walks and ease up on eating. Smoking—he was up to thirty cigarettes a day—seemed to affect his stamina, and after a sharp gallop on a lively horse he felt winded. He cut out cigarettes.

But "Moppy," as other apprentices had nicknamed him because of his unruly black hair, was anything but serious once the horses were bedded down for the night. He played football and boxed with the same zest as he rode horses, and was ready to join in any rough and tumble ragging with other lads. He had a quick temper.

Couldn't Tell Gordon From Steve

They began to talk of Richards in 1923 as the most promising apprentice in the game. He rode forty-nine winners. The next year, when he was twenty, Richards increased his score to sixty-one. The following year, the crowds were beginning to watch for the lad with the style so like Steve Donoghue's that, when riding in similar colours, they could hardly be distinguished apart. In fact, Steve's ten-year reign as champion jockey was over. That season, Gordon rode more than a hundred winners, and many of them were victories over his old tutor. The twenty-one year old miner's son had arrived as England's new champion jockey.

Gordon's ability to ride winners on the racecourse gave him a well-earned ride on sport's magic carpet to fame and fortune. He had a fine car, money in the bank, and the prospect of earning a steady income of at least £5,000 a year for many years to come. But just as he was taking off, the carpet disappeared.

On the first two days at the opening Lincoln



Triumph, 1933: At the end of a tense year, Gordon on Golden King breaks Fred Archer's record of 246 wins in a season. "Thank goodness it's over," he said, pale and trembling



Disaster, 1935: Brought down by a horse swerving directly in front, Gordon narrowly escaped death as the

meeting in 1926 Gordon began well. He rode five winners, but they were his only winners in the whole season. A chill turned into pneumonia which developed into tuberculosis. Propped up in his bed in a sanatorium near Cromer, Gordon told his friends despondently: "I shall never ride again."

For that season, Gordon's prophecy was true. But he was a model patient and made a remarkable recovery. When, fit once more, he was hoisted into the saddle at the start of the 1927 season, the magic touch had not been lost. He rode more winners than any champion jockey had done for sixteen years—164.

From that time onwards the records have tumbled consistently although, in 1930, Freddy Fox spoiled an unbroken run from 1925 to 1941 by riding one more winner than Richards on the very last day of the racing season. In twenty-five years, Gordon's only other conqueror—in the year he broke a leg—was the redoubtable Harry Wragg.

Gordon's Lucky Track

There are not many records left for Gordon to shatter as, a middle-aged man, he continues to ride with all the confidence and fight he had twenty years ago. Ten times in his life he has accomplished the extraordinary feat of riding 200 winners in a season. On some tracks, Gordon is always successful. He has, for instance, ridden twice as many winners at Alexandra Park as any other jockey.

But there are odd gaps in his unique career. His failure to ride a Derby winner is, of course, well known. Gordon, too, has always gone away empty-handed from the racecourses at Beverley and Carlisle. But it is doubtful if these gaps worry him when he looks over his record, especially for the Classics: three wins in the Two Thousand Guineas, two each in the One Thousand Guineas and the Oaks, and five wins in the St. Leger.

Gordon's sister, Rhoda, believes that his loyalty to the stables he is retained by has kept the turf's greatest prize from his grasp. She has said that the champion could have ridden horses in the Derby that have won the race, but preferred to serve the owners and trainers he worked for all through the season. Gordon's own reaction is a jaunty shrug of his broad shoulders. "A hoodoo, on me?" he says. "Not at all. The Derby will come along before I finish. It's just been one of those things in racing. There's nothing really remarkable about it. I admit I have had the pick of the stable and have had the loser more than once. But you can never tell with horses. If a horse goes well

at home, he should go well on the racecourse. But it doesn't always work out that way."

One of Gordon Richards's favourite stories is that of the famous jockey, "Morny" Cannon, who was reproached by a woman owner for not winning a race. "Madam," said Morny, after the tirade, "if they won't go, I can't go."

The art of jockeyship is difficult and many sided, and there is no doubt that Gordon does not excel in every branch. But, as an all-rounder he has no superior. "One word describes Gordon's success, and that is balance," Brownie Carslake once said. The balance and rhythm of his riding are a poem in horsemanship; they are wonderful to watch.

It is his finishes that have made Gordon's riding famous. At the crucial moment near the post he throws the reins at his mount. Sometimes it seems as if he is riding out over his horse's head, in his efforts to urge him on. To onlookers the feat is exciting and impressive, but to other jockeys in the race, especially younger jockeys, it can be unnerving.

At Kempton Park one day, I watched an apprentice near the finishing post with lengths to spare. The apprentice turned in the saddle—a rash thing to do at any time—and saw with horror that Gordon was riding one of his spectacular finishes. If the apprentice had kept his head he would still have won with ease. But he panicked so much that, although he had not many yards to go, he could not get his horse into its stride again. Gordon won what had seemed a hopeless race by a head.

Rode Bare-backed—And Won

"Gordon never knows when he is beaten," a trainer said to me during a discussion of the champion's greatness. He recalled that in 1945, Richards was riding a horse called Levantine. At the distance, Gordon lost his saddle and, although he was well placed, it seemed certain that the misfortune would cost him the race. "Gordon did what few other jockeys would have done," said the trainer. "He took his foot out of the stirrup and rode the horse bare-backed. And he won."

Gordon uses everything to ride: his hands, his body and his head. He can get out of trouble quicker than any other jockey riding and, more important, he can avoid trouble. If he has ever been afraid of a horse—and some horses have a mean and unpredictable streak in them—nobody has ever noticed it.

Considering that Gordon's life has been spent riding highly bred and spirited horses, his injuries have been light. But he has had many narrow escapes. "You can call me lucky," says

Gordon, adding hurriedly as he taps his head: "Touch wood." Like many jockeys and trainers, Gordon is highly superstitious."

The narrowest escape of all was in 1935, a year he remembers as one of his unluckiest. A horse named Nevertheless kicked him sharply early in the season and, a few weeks later, he was shaken when his aircraft made a forced landing. In August, tragedy visited the Richards family. His wife gave birth to twins but the boy died.

Next month, Gordon had an experience that might easily have ended his life, or at best broken his iron nerve. During a race at Newbury, a horse ran "green," swerved in front of him, and brought his mount down. The champion, who as usual was with the leaders, hit the grass heavily as the field thundered up behind him.

Recalling the accident, Gordon said that as he hit the ground a picture flashed through his mind of Freddy Fox as he fell in front of several of them at Doncaster. "I remembered that Freddy sat up and I knew at all costs that I must not do the same. It was not very pleasant, but I crouched there and the rest of the field flew over me." Gordon hurt his back and suffered from concussion, but within a fortnight he was riding again and finished the season with a score of 210 winners. He was champion, of course.

His Use Of The Whip

The only serious injury that Gordon has suffered, apart from a broken toe in 1938 and broken ribs in 1947, was ten years ago. He had ridden twenty-two winners when a horse lashed out and broke his leg. He did not ride again that season.

Gordon always handles horses firmly and on occasions, on and off the course, administers punishment. Some people, in an attempt to prove that Gordon is a paragon, lean over backwards to argue and write that he never uses the whip, which is absurd. Every jockey carries his whip for use, not ornament. But where Gordon differs from lesser jockeys is that he knows *when* to use his whip. "I flash my whip over a horse's crest but near his eyes," Gordon said once, to describe his technique when he puts a horse under pressure. "I don't hit him. He can see in an instant what I want and he understands. But I let the jade or quitter know who is master."

Riding is richly rewarding work—if you make the grade. But it is practically a closed trade in which, as Gordon himself has pointed out, only about thirty jockeys make a living, although hundreds try. A few of the jockeys are up among the thousands, but the rest, with heavy expenses to meet, are often glad they have to "waste" so that they can save on meals. Jockeys who can



field thundered over him. He suffered concussion—but finished the year champion

ride in a class above the average are always sure to earn good money in racing anywhere. Piggott, this year, his first as a fee-taking jockey, will probably net more than £4,000, reckoning his fees at the standard rate of £5 a ride, £7 a win and a percentage of "present" from grateful owners.

Piggott is fifteen, but he got his chance earlier than most lads because his father is a trainer. Gordon, without anyone to introduce him to the game at such an early age, was twenty before he struck rich. But since he entered the big money class, Gordon has not left it, except for the two years he was ill and the war years, when fewer race meetings were held. The first year he was riding he probably netted £5,000, and his chief extravagance was to exchange the fast motor cycle he rode for an equally fast car. The rest of the money was banked.

Unlike some riders today who freelance successfully, Gordon has always lived on stable retainers, and in 1927 held contracts for £6,000 from Lord Glanely, £1,500 from Darling and £1,000 from Hartigan. Presents and additional rides brought his earnings to well over £10,000.

Owners and trainers are often temperamental men who act suddenly and often irrationally. In 1931, the first jockey of the famous Beckhampton stables was Freddy Fox, who the year before had beaten Richards in a thrilling photo-finish for the title of champion jockey. There was more at stake than one year's title. As the 1931 season drew to a close and Gordon was certain to be champion, Fox was told abruptly that he would not be riding for the Beckhampton stable the following year. Richards had been engaged on a contract that put his earnings higher than ever.

Stables Queue For His Services

The basic retainer was £4,000, but he was to skim off for himself ten per cent of the stable's earnings—a system first exploited by Donoghue. That year, Beckhampton had won £70,000 and expected to do better the following year. With his freelance earnings, Gordon could expect an income of between £15,000 and £20,000 a year.

Gordon's association with Beckhampton continued when Darling retired and Murless took over; and today first calls on his service are still made by Beckhampton, followed by the Aga Khan and the Duke and Duchess of Norfolk. After that, seven other stables stand in the queue and each pays a retainer for the privilege. It sometimes happens that none of his patrons has a mount, and then Gordon will ride for the first owner or trainer who asks him.

"A trainer or owner comes to me and says, 'Gordon, I want you to ride my horse,'" Gordon

said in an expansive moment. "I say 'Righto, sir.' When the day arrives, the trainer saddles the horse, remarking, 'It is unnecessary to give you any instructions, Gordon. You know how to ride.' Then I just go along and win."

Once he has given his word that he will ride, Gordon never goes back on it, and his invariable rule is to take the first ride offered. There is no shilly-shallying or asking for time to think in case something better turns up. The owner of a couple of horses who seeks Gordon's services is treated with the same deferential courtesy as the great owners of the turf, and when a "present" comes along he never forgets to write his thanks.

Gordon has kept his money, unlike many jockeys who were born poor and spent lavishly. As a busy jockey, moving from one end of the country to the other, his expenses are high. But his earnings were high when income tax was lower than it is today. His investments have been carefully made, and, although he lives well and sent his children to public schools, his savings probably now amount to a six-figure fortune.

Many of his closest friends knew him before his name was famous. His habits, in fact, have changed hardly at all in a quarter of a century. For the Lincoln races he still stays in the rooms over a baker's shop to which he was taken by the travelling head lad from Foxhill years ago. At Newmarket, he is always welcome at his brother's house.

Perhaps the fickleness of racegoers has helped him to keep level-headed. After all the years at the top he is the most popular jockey riding, but he knows what it feels like to be greeted with jeers and cries of "Big-head," the nickname given to him by punters who have backed his mounts during inevitable runs of bad luck.

"It does not do to get too big for my boots," he said, long ago. "The dividing line between success and failure is narrower than most people realize." Gordon's boots are not so big anyway—size four.

Never Misses A Meal

During the flat-racing season, Gordon has little leisure time. The stables do not pay him fat retainers for nothing except riding in public on the racecourse. Each day he is out at seven o'clock riding gallops, or "work" as jockeys call it. There are constant consultations about the condition of colts and older horses, and after racing is over the telephone goes on ringing until well after dinner.

Being champion jockey is big business, and brings Gordon two or three hundred letters a week. His wife Marjorie helps with the business side, but he still has to employ a full-time secretary to keep pace with the work. "It's a gruelling life all right," says Gordon. "I'm pretty well all in when the end of the season comes round." But he is spared one trial. Weight is no problem. He never diets and never misses a meal.

In keeping with his solid character, Gordon is a home and family lover. His marriage in 1927 to Marjorie Winckle, a pretty assistant in a Swindon bootshop, was a runaway romance and has been completely happy. When they were married at Gerrards Cross they were so shy and worried about the publicity that might result if the secret leaked out that they left the church by separate entrances.

Twenty years ago, they paid £5,000 for a comfortable, creeper-covered rambling house built by a former master at Marlborough School on a hill above Savernake Forest. Two of his family are now grown up. The eldest boy, Jack, is in the motor business at Salisbury. Peter, now twenty, inherited his father's touch with horses. He was too heavy to be a jockey and is learning to be a trainer. Marjorie is a schoolgirl in her teens.

Gordon is proud of his eight-roomed house, his ornate and lavishly equipped bathroom—"just like a film star's," the family say—his billiards room at the bottom of the garden, where he keeps Fred Archer's whip and spurs, his glass-fronted pigeon cote, his gardener's cottage. He is

proud, too, of the mementoes in his drawing- and dining-rooms—Munnings's painting of Sun Chariot given to him along with a silver cigarette case by the King, Steve Donoghue's cherished painting of "The Tetrarch," left to him in Steve's will, the clock from racing correspondents, the silver bowl from fellow jockeys and other trophies accumulated during a dazzling career.

He has earned his success and enjoys it modestly. But racing is his life and if it ever had to go, there would be little left. Once he said that when he finished riding winners he would finish with the Turf, but friends say now he is not so certain. When it is all over he might take a few horses to train.

In the winter, he likes to watch football, and greyhound racing holds a thrill for him. During the war—he was turned down by the R.A.F. and had to be content with serving in the Home Guard—he presented his pigeons worth £2,000 to the War Office, but he is now building up a collection again.

Talk to him of retiring and he becomes impatient. It is much more than an even-money chance that he will not only be riding when he is fifty but that he will still top the jockeys' table. His hand has lost none of its cunning, his brain not a segment of its coolness. THE END



An early picture of Gordon and family. His marriage to Marjorie was a runaway romance and has been completely happy



Gordon on his 300-acre farm. He has invested his money carefully and his savings probably run into six figures

Star optimist of the Open Air Theatre

Every summer, for love of Shakespeare's plays, Robert Atkins bets £2,000 a week against rain. It's not a profession, says his wife. It's a religion

by MARJORIE EARL



Robert Atkins shows Prudence Hyman the ass's head he wears when playing the rôle of Bottom



Producer in action. Atkins points a finger to emphasize his orders during a *Faust* rehearsal

ROBERT ATKINS, SIXTY-FIVE YEAR OLD impresario of Regent's Park, London, is unique among Englishmen on two counts. He is the only producer known to the theatre whose ardour for Shakespeare has fired him to stage all thirty-seven of the plays, and he is the nation's only citizen with the temerity to stake his purse and his reputation on the English climate.

For nineteen years Atkins has been producing Shakespeare under the unpredictable skies of Regent's Park. Each season he mutters "Never again," but every spring he once more has the urge to bet close on £2,000 a week against rain.

Burly, bald and ruddy-cheeked, Atkins looks like a compound of Falstaff and Mr. Pickwick. He is so immersed in Shakespeare that his speech has acquired a fruity Elizabethan pungency and his voice the sepulchral timbre of *Hamlet's* ghost. "My dear young lady," he may say to an imperfectly poised ingénue, "you're coming along as though you were carrying a basket of fish. Please remember that you are an indignant virgin who goes to Sunday School twice every Sunday."

A diehard Shakespearean from the schools of Tree and Forbes-Robertson, Atkins has been acting or producing Shakespeare almost continuously since 1906, and his favourite recreation is reading Shakespeare. "For Robert it's neither a profession nor a pastime," says his wife. "It's a religion." His invocation to young players, delivered to the accompaniment of breast-thumping, is: "Forget the externals. Get it from inside. Get the *poetry* of it," he adds, his voice rising in a crescendo.

Master Of The Love Speech

When directing his players, Atkins gives such a good performance that it leaves them poised between laughter and amazed respect. It isn't uncommon, when criticizing a single intonation, for him to recite the whole of a Shakespearean maiden's love speech with appropriate gestures. Even his ordinary conversation often sounds like an oracle in iambic pentameter. Just before the opening of this season, when a photographer asked permission to shoot Puck under an umbrella, he declaimed: "There will be no umbrellas. It never rains in Regent's Park." Just at this moment the sun peeked from behind a cloud. "Behold, God has spoken," said Atkins.

This boast was strictly for the gallery. The fact is, Atkins and his company are perpetually terrorized by rain. "We need nearly £2,000 a week to keep our heads above water," he says. "You can sell the whole theatre out by 4 p.m., and two hours later the booking plan has completely gone to pot because of a few rain clouds." One night the theatre was booked to near capacity of £300 but played to only £126. The cost of one brief shower was £174. The play was *The Tempest*.

Regent's Park Open Air Theatre has held as many as 4,000 people on a fine summer's night. If it rains, the show goes on in an adjoining tent which seats about 1,000. And if rain comes during the performance the spectators have to shift. One season rain drove the audience into the tent twenty nights out of sixty.

There have been times when the audience has shifted from the open air to the tent more than once during a single performance. These mass movements are not without their hazards. Once the actress playing *Hermia* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was unaware that between scenes



The Open Air Theatre puts on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. On a fine night, an audience of 4,000 can watch. If it rains the show goes on in a tent

the audience had moved from the tent to the open air because of a sudden brightening of the skies. As they waited outside for her entrance, they heard her voice coming over the public address system as she ran on stage in the tent. "Oh weary night, oh tedious night, oh where is everybody anyway?" she said.

In the early 1930s, when the Open Air Theatre was new, there was still another weather hazard. In those days the run continued until the end of September. Regent's Park, which is built on a swamp, gives off heavy mists on warm autumn evenings and sometimes the actors would be obliterated by fog before the end of the last act. Now the season ends on August 31.

The Open Air Theatre was started in 1932 by Sydney Carroll, who wanted to revive outdoor productions of Shakespeare close to the spot where Ben Greet had staged them fifty years before. Carroll invited Atkins to be his producer-director. Though it rained on every one of the first four trial matinées, Atkins wasn't discouraged. In 1933 a full season of open-air productions drew an enthusiastic audience and by 1939, when Carroll withdrew and Atkins became the venture's backer as well as its producer-director, the Open Air Theatre had become a national institution.

Voices Must Be Magnified

It takes Atkins about three weeks of intensive work to rehearse one of his productions. He usually picks his cast during the winter, preferring actors and actresses who have proved their devotion to Shakespeare and who have worked with him before, either at the Old Vic or the Memorial Theatre at Stratford.

One of the difficulties at Regent's Park is training players to magnify their voices and actions to suit the enlarged open-air stage. Another problem is that of guarding their health. During the first weeks of May, Regent's Park usually shimmers and shivers in the mists of spring. Ballet dancers in tights, actors and actresses who must "die" or "sleep" on the wet ground several times a day and sit around outdoors waiting for cues, face health risks. One year, Leslie French, the company's most experienced Puck, caught pneumonia and was off for half the season.

The Ministry of Works last year eliminated

some of the risk by providing brick dressing-rooms. When the theatre started, insubstantial huts were used for dressing-rooms, and when these were razed by fire in 1937 tents were substituted.

In 1949, the Ministry of Works also added a new theatre tent to the park's amenities. But for economic considerations, Atkins would just as soon put the show on in the tent because it is closer to the Elizabethan convention of theatre construction. In 1936, defying the discouragement of theatrical friends, he converted the boxing ring at Blackfriars into an Elizabethan theatre and produced *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Henry V* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. "If bombing had not destroyed the ring, I should still be giving performances there and under much better conditions," he says today.

Struggle To Get On The Stage

Atkins was reared by an aunt and uncle who opposed his theatrical ambitions. At seventeen, determined to get on the stage, he left home and took a job in London as a clerk. Tree's Academy, now the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, was offering scholarships. He applied for an audition and got it, and eventually became the Royal Academy's first gold medallist.

His first speaking part on the professional stage, in April, 1906, was as Henry Percy in *Henry IV*. Since then he has been almost continuously behind the footlights, except for a four-year break in the first World War. Shortly after he left the Old Vic, where he was director of drama from 1920 to 1925, he met Sydney Carroll and began producing plays for him.

One severe test of Atkins's skill at stage effects was a Strindberg play at the Old Vic. Candles had to blow out and light up, doors open and close without human assistance. "We worked it out all right because I had good technicians," says Atkins, with characteristic modesty.

His modesty screens brilliant acting ability. One of his admirers tells of when he played Macbeth in a small hall in Mornington Crescent, North London. The audience was enraptured by his performance and called him back again and again. Finally he went to his dressing-room, removed his crown and began to take off his make-up. The audience continued to clamour

so he took another curtain call. Then he returned to the dressing-room. Again the audience called him back, and this time he had shed part of his costume. By the time he had finished taking calls he was fully dressed in his street clothes and the audience was still applauding.

Sydney Carroll has described Atkins as "one of the most forbearing, sympathetic and good-natured souls in the theatre, who will go to any lengths to get everything perfect. It must be a very trying situation indeed which will make him lose his equilibrium."

One of the few occasions when Atkins was striving for perfection of detail and *did* lose his equilibrium occurred in 1927 at the Cairo Opera House, which is built of wood and plaster and is protected by elaborate fire precautions. For a performance of *Othello*, Atkins asked permission to carry naked torches on to the stage. Permission was granted. On the opening night, Atkins, playing Iago, turned in the middle of a speech to give the audience the benefit of his full volume and almost stopped dead in amazement. There on the stage beside him were two firemen in full uniform, one carrying two buckets of water and the other a hatchet.

"Never Mind The Weather"

Atkins acknowledges that in a fine season the Open Air Theatre at Regent's Park can be a little gold mine, but seasons are seldom uniformly fine, and London audiences cannot be lured out to see a whole galaxy of stars on a rainy night. This is an attitude Atkins cannot understand. Shakespeare, in his opinion, should lure everybody out, no matter what the weather. And for pure enjoyment of the lyric poetry, he thinks it is difficult to beat his new tent at Regent's Park.

In the eyes of his great friend, A. P. Herbert, Atkins is the incurable optimist to whom Herbert penned a sonnet which begins:

*King of all optimists once more you bare,
Your gallant breast to our rough open air.*

In the view of enthusiasts, Atkins, who was awarded the C.B.E. in 1949, is to the classical theatre what Sir Henry Wood was to classical music—the people's producer, the man who believes in the music of the spoken word for the masses.

THE END



Mercer lunged out. Longo caught the blow on his face and, stumbling backwards, he sent ornaments crashing down from the glass-packed shelves

Venetian Bird

by VICTOR CANNING

ILLUSTRATED BY ARTHUR SEABRIGHT

Mercer had seen more than enough. All that mattered now was escape. He had not bargained with Uccello

H E HAD TAKEN THE BEATING-UP. Though he was sure it was coming, Mercer knew he could do nothing about it. . . . It was his own fault for trusting a woman. The woman was Adriana Medova, director of the Palazzo Boria Galleries in Venice, and, Mercer knew now, the wife of Gian Uccello, the man he had come to Italy to find. Uccello had saved the life of an American flyer during the war; a reward was waiting for him.

But there was more to the case than that, as Mercer found out when a possible informant, a man who knew Uccello, was murdered. Then Adriana told him that Uccello was once her lover, but had been killed in an air raid.

What Mercer didn't know then was that Count

Boria, owner of the *Palazzo*, had arranged for him to be told that. The count wanted Mercer out of the way before he stumbled on other, more dangerous aspects of the case—aspects that Adriana did not know about.

But Mercer wasn't fooled. Uccello, he discovered, was alive and in Venice. So the count tried other tactics. Mercer was offered a bribe and told by the count's two hired assassins, Gufo and Moretto, he'd better take it and go. There were other means of persuading him. . . . Mercer didn't go. He returned the bribe, via Adriana, and went to stay with Rosa Melitus, an affectionate old-time colleague. It was plain to him now that something important was behind Uccello's disappearance. He'd seen the man's police

record—Spadoni, the local police chief, had shown it to him, believing Uccello was dead. It was a black record of treachery and murder. How Count Boria was involved wasn't clear, but he'd overheard that the count was going to keep an appointment the next day at the Orfeo glass-works on Murano Island; he would be there.

It was then he received Adriana's letter asking him to meet her. Mercer went. Since the first time they had met, he'd been strangely drawn to the girl, and this job that made him suspect her was distasteful to him.

They took a boat out to an island in the lagoon. There she told him Uccello was her husband, that the count was helping him to escape from the country. Mercer was on the point of believing her when they were interrupted. Gufo and Moretto had been waiting there for him; Mercer took the beating-up he'd been promised.

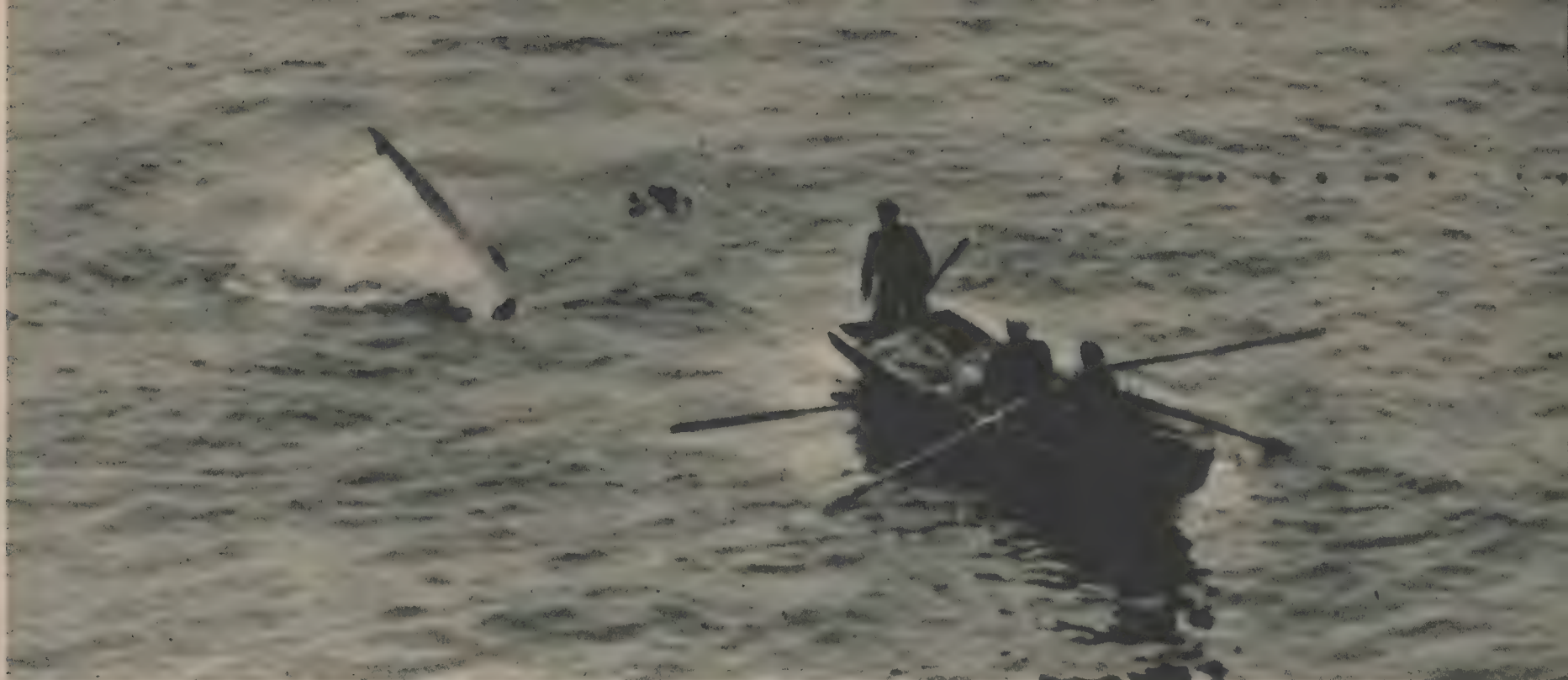
He was rowed back by Adriana, who protested she hadn't known of the trap. Later, watched by the two thugs, Mercer left Venice by train, but got out at the first stop to double back to Rosa's. He was purged of all sentiment now. He was going on with the case—and the next step was for him to be at Orfeo's tomorrow.

PART 5

Appointment At Orfeo's

At five o'clock the next evening, Mercer was on his way to Murano. Rosa had arranged for a gondola to pick him up on the canal edge a few yards from the house. A second time, she

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In their tarred calico boat, Achill Islanders go after a shark caught in the nets. Tony McNella stands ready with his hand-harpoon—a bayonet on a pole

The grocer goes fishing for sharks

by RUSHWORTH FOGG

For Joe Sweeney and his crew, a battle won means £12. And they all know it could be lost with a single flip of the monster's tail

JOE SWEENEY LIKES to take time off from running the big, greyish-white store beside the bridge which connects Achill Island to the Mayo coast of Ireland, put on beret and windcheater, jump into his battered green jeep and drive twenty miles across the island to Keem Bay for a day's shark fishing.

To this soft-spoken man in his middle thirties, the word "shark" does not conjure up the film-goers' mental picture of a fierce man-eater whose sinister triangular fin cleaves blue tropical seas dotted with coral isles. To him, the shark is a stupid, elephant-grey giant whose powerful tail stroke is more dangerous than his teeth. The biggest fish in the North Atlantic, the basking shark may reach over thirty feet in length and weigh more than four tons, yet it feeds only on plankton, the sea scum formed of billions upon billions of microscopic organisms. Sweeney and his men caught 400 sharks last year. They hope to have netted 500 by the end of the present April-to-July season.

"With shark liver oil fetching from £65 to £75 a ton, we get about £10 worth out of an average fish," says Joe. "Then the body makes £2 worth of fishmeal. We're experimenting with preserving the skin, but it's a tricky business."

It was Joe Sweeney who revived the 100-years dead shark-fishing industry of Ireland's biggest Atlantic island. He describes himself as a grocer, but the shop that bears the name of his late father, Patrick Sweeney, is more like a department store, selling provisions, seeds, ironmongery and nearly everything else Achill

Islanders need. "Prams to coffins," he says with a grin. "Sweeney serves you from cradle to grave." When he took the shop over, he found there was time to take an interest, too, in the local salmon and cod fisheries.

"About eight years ago," he says, "I found that sharks were breaking up my salmon nets. My first idea was to get rid of them. I went out in a boat with a .303 rifle and dum-dum bullets and blazed away. I killed lots—up to, twenty a day. But still they came in their hundreds. I tried wire nets. The sharks just burst through them. You'd need iron bars to hold a basking shark, or a manilla net, such as we use now. When he tangles in it, its elasticity tires him out. Often he suffocates in it, and there's no need to finish him off with a bayonet."

A Question For Solomon

Joe started making inquiries about the commercial value of the basking shark. He found that up to a century ago they had been harpooned off Achill for their oil, which was used for lamps until paraffin came in. He learned, too, that there was a market for the oil in England, where it is mixed with other oils as a "hardener," for use in soap-making, leather-dressing and for machine-oil.

"Three years ago I went into the business seriously," says Joe. "Now there are so many outfits operating in Keem Bay—eight at the moment—and the nets are so close along the cliff bottom that when the fish are coming along in numbers it's a question for Solomon



With another shark in the bag, Sweeney smiles. His idea revived the industry

which sharks are whose. My contention is that if the head's in my net, it's my shark, even if the tail has fouled somebody's else's."

Most sharks are caught at night, when they are more liable to blunder into the nets which stretch out about eighty yards from the bottom of the cliff, and twenty-two feet deep into the water. They are usually dead in the morning. Day-caught sharks provide the excitement, because they have to be killed. When the line of cork floats marking one of the Sweeney nets starts dancing wildly on the sunlit water, three men launch a curragh—one of the traditional island rowboats of tarred calico stretched on a wooden frame.

If Joe Sweeney is not grocerying that day, he likes to be one of them. More usually, big Tom Roddy and young Tony Lavelle row the flimsy craft to where a great anchor-shaped tail, silhouetted black against the sea, beats desperately around. In the stern of the curragh stands Tony McNella, a small, wiry man, with a 1917 British Army bayonet at the end of a long pole, poised ready to spear the huge fish.

A mere touch of the tail, five feet across and moved by powerful muscles, would split the



A twenty-footer hangs from the *Salve Regina's* mast. This is not very big for a basking shark

calico boat, but the curragh cheerfully rides the waves around it, manoeuvring for position. ("That's what frightens me," says Joe Sweeney. "Half the chaps can't swim.") Tony McNella's favourite killing technique is to slit the shark from midhead to snout, opening its small brain.

Once dead, the shark is towed, still in the net, by motor-boat to the converted Grimbsy fishing trawler, *Salve Regina*, anchored in midbay. "But there have been times when Tony couldn't get at a vital spot, and the shark had to be towed along still alive and mad with pain," recalls Joe. "One of them wrapped itself round the anchor of the *Salve Regina* and actually towed her—a sixty-seven foot vessel with eleven men aboard—a hundred yards before it died. And it wasn't one of the big fellows. It's an odd thing but the big ones, like our record shark which was thirty-five feet long and weighed six tons, don't show nearly as much fight as the medium-sized fish."

Factory Ship On The Spot

The crew of the *Salve Regina* fasten a cable round the dead shark's tail and haul it with a steam-winch to the top of the mast, disentangling the net as they do so. Paddy McGreal slits the belly open with his scimitar-like butchering knife to let out the great pink liver, which is taken below deck to have the oil steamed out.

This process has an appalling smell. "But you get used to the stink," chuckles Joe Sweeney. "You get full of it, and you forget about it."

Until recently the shark carcasses have gone first to Lisburn, later to Dublin, for conversion into fishmeal for animal feeding. Now they are processed on the spot in the *New Choice* factory ship, a converted trawler of 230 tons, which Sweeney has brought to the bay.

The *New Choice's* first few days of work in the bay, in May, were interrupted by the only fatality to occur so far to anybody connected with the Achill shark-fishing industry. A popular, red-bearded fisherman from Donegal, Charles Osborne, was helping members of a London film unit to shoot shark-fishing scenes. He had taken director Sam Lee, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Falkus and cameraman Bill Brendon four miles out to sea when suddenly a huge wave capsized and sank Osborne's boat, *Pride of Cratlagh*. Lee and Mrs. Falkus floated on rubber tubes, Osborne and Brendon on petrol tins. Falkus set off to swim for help and was picked up by a fishing-boat. All the shark-fishing fleet—*New Choice*, motor-boats and curraghs—searched

throughout the weekend for survivors, but found only the bodies of Lee and Mrs. Falkus floating on rubber tubes. Joe Sweeney points out that the tragedy was only indirectly connected with shark fishing.

"It isn't really a dangerous business," he says. "Only tremendously hard work—up to sixteen hours a day at the peak of the season. In the early days we didn't know the ropes, and there were a few near accidents. Even in Keem Bay, sheltered as it is from the Atlantic, a twenty-foot wave can swamp a curragh. Those outfits that bring their sharks to the beach run most risks. There are days when fishing is safe enough, but the heavy swell breaking on the strand makes it difficult to tow a shark ashore."

One outfit that has had a narrow escape when landing a shark on Keem Strand is that led by Charley O'Malley Tom—his father's Christian name is tacked on to his surname, Island fashion, to distinguish him from Achill's other Charley O'Malleys. The three men found themselves struggling in the water, with their curragh at the bottom and a dead shark floundering atop of them, hurled about by the waves. But Charley O'Malley Tom makes light of this. At least, he says, he's sure his sharks are dead. He

finishes them off with a shotgun before bringing them ashore.

Not all the shark catch is netted. A few fall victim to the Norwegian harpoon gun, fired by Jimmy Needham from the bow of the green-painted *Girl Pat*. "It's the best way of killing a shark," Joe Sweeney says. "It's instantaneous. But harpooning isn't so productive as netting. You can only get your shark that way if it breaks surface reasonably near you. I've done a bit of hand harpooning myself, and that's quite a different matter. You've got to devote hours to one shark. I remember one I got with the hand harpoon that dodged round in circles for four hours, thrashing about in its pain and rage before I'd played it out."

It's a game that takes toughness and patience, and is probably the most dangerous way of going for sharks. It was the method used by Achill Islanders in the days when shark oil was used in lamps.

There are times when the sharks are "running well" and there are perhaps forty in Keem Bay at a time. On other days the lookout man on the cliffside strains his eyes in vain. Then Sweeney's land foreman, Paddy Kelly, will organize the mending of the nets. It is important work, because each net costs about £20 with the good manilla rope, the corks to hold up the top and the eight leaden balls, each weighing a stone, to keep the bottom down. If looked after, a net is good for eight or ten sharks, but in the end their rough, slimy skins wear out and rot the rope.

Some of the men make the nets, with material provided, for £3 a net during the winter. But most of the shark fishermen are out of Achill at that time of the year, doing labouring work in England and Scotland. Achill has not sufficient resources to keep its people at home.

Live In Beach Bunkhouse

Those members of the Sweeney outfit who don't sleep aboard the *New Choice* or the *Salve Regina* live during the working week—there is no Sunday fishing—in a concrete bunkhouse on the beach. There are two other buildings there, one stone-built by "the Scott crowd," which is backed by an English syndicate, the other a boiler hut in which Charley O'Malley Tom's outfit steam oil out of sharks' livers.

One job done by the land gang is expected to become obsolete: the lookout on the cliff. Joe Sweeney intends to experiment with echosounders to detect sharks. Another of his ideas is that shark meat ought to be saleable for human consumption. "I can see a time coming when the British Ministry of Food gets interested in it," he predicts with a twinkle. "It's very tender. You can hardly tell it from pork, if you have a good cook." THE END

Harry Hopkins reports from the Far East Danger Zone

JOHN BULL's senior staff writer, Harry Hopkins, who is now making a lengthy air tour of the key danger points in Communist-threatened South-East Asia, has sent his first dispatch from Hongkong. It is a vivid assessment of the peril from Red China that faces Britain's "boom or bust" colony—a vital outpost on the edge of an awakening continent.

With the article Hopkins sent this comment:

"The situation could go pop at any time—not so much perhaps in the way of direct attack, but in the way of causing terrible trouble inside Hongkong. And that may be coming up anyway without much provocation."

Many of the colony's most famous personalities helped

Hopkins to analyse the situation. They included the Honourable Sir Shou Son Chow, ninety-year-old banker who has seen six wars, and veteran Hongkong hands like P. S. Cassidy, for thirty-eight years a Far Eastern trader, who says: "In Hongkong, the abnormal is normal."

Harry Hopkins's first-hand account of what is happening in Hongkong will appear in JOHN BULL next week.

In view of increased costs, newspapers cannot carry sufficient spare copies to meet holiday demands. So, wherever you are, let the local newsagent or bookstall know as soon as possible—preferably a week in advance—that you want JOHN BULL. This is the only way to be sure of getting a copy.



Seeds of doubt

by SUSAN GILRUTH

ILLUSTRATED BY PAUL RAINER

She thought she knew her husband inside out. Then the letters began to come

IT WAS ON A Monday morning that Mrs. Pargeter received the first anonymous letter. It arrived by the second post at eleven o'clock, and Bessie, the daily help, handed it to her.

At first Mrs. Pargeter couldn't imagine what it was. She had heard of anonymous letters, of course, but she had never been the recipient of one before, and nor—to her knowledge—had any of her friends. They were merely unpleasant things you read about in the Sunday newspapers, like cases of enticement and bodies in trunks. They simply did not happen to people you actually knew.

Mrs. Pargeter read the letter a second time and turned it over to look at the back. The back was quite blank. Then she examined the envelope, in case there had been some silly mistake about the address. But no—there was nothing wrong there. The envelope, of poor quality white paper, was definitely addressed to her. There was no mistake; the large, sprawling capitals were quite distinct. It was written in ordinary blue ink, and the postmark was: "8.30 a.m. N.W.1."

It was all very odd.

She read the letter again, for the third time, slowly. It did not take long to read, consisting of a single line of the same printed capitals. It asked baldly: "Do you really know your husband?"

It had never previously occurred to Mrs. Pargeter, during twelve years of married life, to question the fact that she knew her husband inside out. Indeed, there had been moments when she had almost regretted knowing him quite so well. She could now confidently anticipate practically every remark he ever made, and knew all his anecdotes and little jokes by heart. But she was devoted to John, who was kind and upright and, in his own way, generous, and she would have died sooner than admit to anyone that the invariable monotony of his waking greeting to her—"Well, dear, and what of the morn?"—had occasionally irritated her almost to the point of wanting to brain him. She had always managed to control her irritation and to reply civilly: "It's raining today," or: "There's been a frost," or whatever might happen to apply.

No, John was all right. His conversation might be devoid of originality, but his habits were



There was no mistaking the envelope, or the writing. At first, she was afraid to pick it up



John was alone, standing close to a phone box and looking at his watch. She decided to wait

regular and she had no cause for complaint. He was a good husband to her, and she had no desire whatever to exchange him for one of those moody, brilliant, incalculable men of passion and genius who seemed to be so popular nowadays in the cinema world. She had never been a particularly emotional woman, and she had no intention of becoming one now.

She returned to the letter and considered it in a level-headed way. Her first reaction, naturally, was to show the thing to John as soon as he returned from the office. It was obviously intended as a practical joke—though not, perhaps, in the best of taste. She would hand it to John, and they would laugh together a little at the extraordinary ideas some people had of humour, and then forget the whole incident.

Mrs. Pargeter turned to her cup of tea, now cold, and prepared to dismiss the matter from her mind.

It was perhaps unfortunate that John should have selected that one particular day out of all the other 364 at his disposal to ring up at five o'clock and say he would be kept late at the office.

He would be home at eight o'clock, he said, and hung up abruptly.

Mrs. Pargeter put down the telephone and stood for a moment with pursed lips. Normally, of course, she would have thought no more about it. Such trifling annoyances as being detained at the office were naturally bound to occur from time to time. But now that she came to think of it, he had got home rather later than usual twice last week, and had volunteered no explanation beyond a grunt and something about the tubes being insufferably crowded during the rush hours. And now this.

A few minutes later, the telephone began to

ring again. Mrs. Pargeter picked up the receiver. "Yes?" she said coldly. "This is Hampstead 00512."

"Oh," exclaimed a fluttery female voice. "I thought—that is, I'm so sorry—I think it must be the wrong number!" There was a click and the line went dead.

Mrs. Pargeter frowned hard at the receiver. It might, of course, be a coincidence—people *did* sometimes dial the wrong number when they were in a hurry. But then, again, it might not.

John did not put in an appearance until very nearly half past nine. She could see at once that he was in a vile temper, and was not in the least surprised when he snapped at her in the hall. She knew that guilty consciences often affected people that way. To her inquiries—her very *natural* inquiries—as to what exactly had detained him until this late hour, John merely made some muttered reply about reorganization of the office staff and several people being down with 'flu. As an explanation it covered very little of the ground and lacked conviction to a marked degree.

John consumed some cold supper off a tray in the drawing-room and immediately buried himself in his evening paper. At half past ten he announced that he was tired and was going to bed. Mrs. Pargeter made no attempt to stop him.

The next morning the whole thing seemed rather silly. Mrs. Pargeter reflected sensibly that she was probably making a mountain out of a molehill, and decided that she would show John the ridiculous letter at breakfast. Pleased to have made up her mind at last, she ran light-heartedly down the stairs to remind Bessie that there was a grapefruit in the larder for Mr. Pargeter.

And there, lying on the mat, was another anonymous letter. There was no doubt about what it was, even before she turned it over. The same greyish-white envelope, the same sprawling capitals. Only this time there was no stamp and it had not been sent through the post. It must have been delivered by hand.

It couldn't have been lying there long, or Bessie would have seen it as she came in. Mrs. Pargeter shivered slightly at the picture of some unknown, sinister figure creeping up the path in broad daylight to hurl his filthy insinuations into a peaceful English household. Perhaps she might catch a glimpse of him even now—skulking among the laurel bushes by the gate. . . . She hurried to the hall window, but there was nobody there.

She picked up the letter. It was addressed, as before, to "Mrs. John Pargeter." She opened it. The message was as brief as the first one, but infinitely more disquieting. It said: "Where was your husband last night?"

MRS. PARGETER clutched at the banisters for support. She could hear John's footsteps crossing the landing from his dressing-room to the bathroom. A few seconds later, a cheerful gargling sound floated down the stairs. Oh, that he could smile and smile and be a villain!

She sat down on the bottom steps of the stairs—a thing she had never done before in her life—and read the message through again. All her early morning optimism and resolution to rise above this nonsense had evaporated. She knew now that she was not going to show John the letters. Neither this one, nor the one which had arrived yesterday. She was going to bide her time.

After that, nothing much happened for a couple of days. But on the Friday of that week, John was late for dinner again. What was more, it was immediately apparent to Mrs. Pargeter as soon as he came in that he had been drinking. She smelled the whisky on his breath the second he set foot in the hall.

"Well, dear," she remarked with forced cheerfulness, "did you have a very busy day at the office?"

"Oh, so-so," John mumbled non-committally. "Beastly cold it's been, hasn't it? Shouldn't be

surprised if we had some snow." He sneezed twice.

Nothing more was said until after dinner. They returned to the drawing-room. Mrs. Pargeter said casually: "There's some port in the dining-room sideboard. Don't you think a little drop might do your cold good?"

"Not a bad idea," John agreed. He fetched the decanter with alacrity. "Have a glass yourself?"

"No, thank you, dear. You know I hardly ever touch anything."

"Oh, well," John said, pouring himself out a generous measure. "Cheerio—first today!"

Mrs. Pargeter picked up her knitting. You couldn't exactly describe John's remark as deliberate *lying*, she told herself. All the same, there was no doubt that the implication of that little gesture had been to deceive. It hadn't deceived *her*.

THE weekend passed uneventfully. But on Monday morning the third letter arrived. It came, like the first, by the eleven o'clock post. When Bessie brought it in, Mrs. Pargeter fancied she detected some slight quickening of interest—a flicker of curiosity—on Bessie's usually stolid countenance.

"That will do, Bessie," said Mrs. Pargeter magnificently. "You needn't wait."

But when Bessie had gone, Mrs. Pargeter found she was trembling so violently that she could scarcely control her fingers as she tore open the flimsy envelope. The postmark this time was "N.W. 11." So the enemy had shifted his ground to Golders Green. The message was longer this time, and the underlying menace more pronounced. It said: "If you want to know what your husband is up to, look out for my next letter." It was signed "A Well-wisher."

That night John was half an hour later than usual in getting home, but he did not seem to have been drinking. He complained about his cold and went to bed directly after dinner.

Mrs. Pargeter sat alone in the drawing-room, brooding. By now she was utterly, ruthlessly and relentlessly determined to find out what it was all about. That there definitely was *something*, she was firmly convinced—everything bore it out. It was her duty as a wife to discover precisely what—or rather *who*, because it must surely be a woman—this hidden menace in John's life might be.

She had first connected it with the girl's voice on the telephone, but had later given up this theory. Anyone at all well acquainted with John's habits must be aware that he would not be at home at five o'clock in the afternoon. Besides, he had just rung up to say he would not be back until late, and the hussy would presumably have known this. No, the telephone call couldn't have had anything to do with it.

Perhaps, she thought, it was somebody new at the office—John had spoken of reorganization among the staff. But who?

Mrs. Pargeter gave it up temporarily and went to bed.

By Thursday, the atmosphere of nervous tension between John and herself had become practically intolerable. It was now quite clear to Mrs. Pargeter that John knew that she knew. But knew *what*? He had taken to questioning her about her own movements—a thing he had never done before. It was perfectly obvious that he had a thoroughly guilty conscience and realized that she was spying on him.

Mrs. Pargeter found herself praying that her self-control would hold out until the next letter arrived—the letter which was going to Tell Her All.

It did not come until the following Tuesday. She took it up to her bedroom and opened it with trembling fingers. The letter said: "Eight thirty tonight under the clock at Victoria." The postmark was "N.W. 3" and it was not signed.

At twelve o'clock, John rang up from the office. Even over the telephone his voice sounded

Continued on page 36



Holding a dog he has saved, Tom Munnelly is hauled from a mine shaft. He has made 100 descents

Rescue man of the Cornish death traps

by LISA STEWART

His is a strange, dramatic life in the land of quiet meadows—where a false step can mean a 400-foot drop

WHEN TOM MUNNELLY SAYS THAT his is an up-and-down kind of life he is being strictly on the level. For in the course of a day's work this burly fifty-five year old Irishman may find himself scaling a cliff face far above the Atlantic breakers or dangling at the end of a rope 100 feet down in subterranean gloom. Tom is the R.S.P.C.A.'s chief inspector for West Cornwall—a stretch of country which probably presents more pitfalls for animals (and humans) than anywhere else in Britain. More dangerous even than the rugged cliffs that sweep towards Land's End are the shafts of the long-disused tin mines that lie like cunningly concealed traps for the unwary. More than 2,000 are marked on the map at Tom's Penzance headquarters.

Of Cornwall's once-famous tin industry, only four working mines remain. In the past century the ventilating shafts of disused workings have been left to crumble; their bricks have been carted away for the building of houses and walls, and over the mouths of the exposed shafts Nature has thrown a camouflage net of bracken, bramble

and grass. They may plunge anything from fifty to 400 feet below ground. Some are flooded 100 feet and more; some are no wider than a well, others are big enough to engulf a house. In one meadow alone, near Lands End, Tom can point to the brink of fifteen of these death traps.

During his eight years in West Cornwall, Tom has made over 100 descents into these foul-smelling holes to rescue animals. Last year the R.S.P.C.A., having exhausted all its customary awards, presented him with a gold watch inscribed simply: "For Gallantry."

It was as a boy in Galway, where that overladen, overworked beast of burden, the Irish donkey, is a common sight, that he felt the stirring of his vocation. He came to England twenty-eight years ago to join the R.S.P.C.A., an organization which has no opposite number in Eire. It was after his work in the London blitz that he was assigned to the Cornish danger area.

The majority of pit shaft victims are dogs, though two heifers and two horses have been dragged to the surface at the end of his 300-foot-long rope—tough enough to take the strain of a ton weight. Apart from local farm dogs, many

a holidaymaker's pet has plunged over the lip of a shaft after the white tail of a rabbit. In a flooded shaft, unless the dog has been miraculously caught on a ledge in its fall, there is little hope of survival. It was into one of these, some years ago, that half the pack of the Cury Hunt plunged after a fox that cunningly skirted its mouth. Only one of the fifteen hounds was saved.

Each rescue demands a different approach, depending on the size and condition of the shaft. First the concealing undergrowth must be hacked away and any overhang shored up to prevent injury from falling stones. A beam is usually placed across the mouth to take the strain of the rope. In one recent case the shaft was so wide that a sixty-foot telegraph pole had to be carted to the scene.

Signals Given By Whistle

Tom's only protection from falling debris is a steel helmet. He carries a torch, for often the sky is a mere starpoint of light far above. Signals to the team of volunteers manning the rope are given by whistle: one blast for "Stop," two blasts for "Lower," and three for "Pull up." "There was one time at the bottom of a 100-foot shaft," Tom recalls, "when I gave three blasts, and nothing happened. I'd found the dog badly frightened but scarcely hurt (talk about a cat's nine lives—it's amazing what a dog can survive). The trouble was the surface team was not strong enough to pull me up. It seemed an eternity before they'd rounded up a couple of farmers and a policeman. In fact, it was over an hour. The air, either from gases or the decay of other less fortunate animals, was suffocatingly foul. I felt by the end as though my eyes were about to burst from my head. But I managed to last out until they pulled me up, when I passed out."

On another occasion he found a dog crouched on a ledge just above the water-line of a large flooded shaft. He swam twenty feet but could not reach the snarling, terrified beast nor coax it to swim to him. Finally, he had to persuade the owner to take his place at the rope's end.

Other dogs are more co-operative. One spaniel had landed miraculously on a ledge sixty feet down. Below it was a drop of another 100 feet. As Tom's dangling body approached, it leapt and caught at a trouser leg. There it swung by its teeth until Tom caught it by its collar and drew it into his arms. "All the way up," Tom remembers, "it licked my face as though to show gratitude. If ever I wonder if a risk is worth taking, I bring that occasion to mind."

He does not always encounter such gratitude from the animals' owners. Once he was called to a remote district where a farmer's cow was trapped in a cesspit. He telephoned from the farm for further help and eventually carried out the rescue. It was a particularly foul one, for the bottom of the pit was three feet deep in filth. Without a word of thanks the farmer's wife retrieved her cow. "That will be fourpence," she said, "for the phone call."

Volunteers Hard To Find

Tom has an invaluable rescue partner in the local fire brigade. And as age begins to tell he is ready to stand down for a younger volunteer when the occasion arises. Some fifteen awards are given each year by the society to local volunteers.

But volunteers are not always easy to come by. There was the time when a fair-sized crowd had gathered by the shaft to which the muffled cries of a dog had been traced. Its youthful owner informed Tom that he would not make the descent "for all the money in England." Tom glanced round the crowd, which included at least fifteen men under thirty; there was not a stir. With a shrug, he was about to buckle on the rescue harness when a well-known local character with a flair for amateur operatics strode forward to take his place. It was not so much his

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NONE BUT THE BRAVE

by EDWARD SMITH

ILLUSTRATED BY KENNETH WYNNE

SISIWA SQUATTED ON THE BEACH with hatred and cold fear twisting inside him. He stared across the muddy waters of the lagoon, feeling the challenge of the great wooden wall that ran, curving, from the mouth of the Lakekamu to the sandbar. And with the challenge came the hatred and the fear. Hatred of Mutuk, the warrior, who mocked him because he had been merely a labourer in the white man's army; and fear that Mutuk might succeed in destroying the wall.

For the wall represented all things in the village of Lalapipi. It represented slow starvation and death, and honour and marriage. It was an evil god, and Nokoto, the old chief, had declared its destruction a feat of valour. He offered feasts of triumph for the victor, the highest honours of the tribe, and the hand of his daughter, Kiri, in marriage.

Sisiwa sighed as he thought of her. Night was coming again to New Guinea, with him no nearer discovering how he might break down the wall. And he had to do it before Mutuk, because he knew he could not live without Kiri.

"It is bad that the wall is not broken, Sisiwa," a soft voice said from behind his back.

He stood up quickly, but did not turn round. The blood pounded in his head and he was suddenly shy. He looked out to sea for a long time, fighting down the shyness. It was not right for a grown man to appear so before a young girl. If he were not masterful, she would lose all respect.

When he did turn, his face was a mask. "It is indeed bad, Kiri," he agreed. "The village will die if it is not broken soon."

The girl stood at the edge of the sand, beneath the palms. Her long skirt was bright with mud dye, and a red flower fluttered in her hair. She was a lighter brown than he, with smooth, rounded shoulders. Her features were finely moulded, and her liquid brown eyes were both proud and soft.

"I have spoken of this with the chief," Sisiwa told her. And then, unable to stop himself, he added: "We talked, too, of my plan to break down the wall."

Kiri's eyes sparkled. "My father has not spoken of this to me, Sisiwa. How is it to be done?"

Sisiwa shuffled his feet in the sand and looked away. He was angry with himself now, for his boasting would only make him look foolish. It was true that the old chief had talked to him of the wall, but he had no plan.

"It is not for everyone to hear," he said stiffly. "The chief will speak of it when he is ready."

"It will be a good plan," Kiri said softly. "You have worked long with the white man and know his magic."

She stepped down to the beach beside him, the top of her head level with his eyes, and they turned and walked towards the village. At any



The man came at him slowly, the knife winking in his hand. Then, behind them, the old chief spoke

Love had made him boast that he could destroy the wall. But love could not show him how to use the dynamite. One way or the other, this would be his last bluff



"I will take all that your father offers," he said, "and I will mould them to my own design

other time it would have been enchantment for Sisiwa, but now he was troubled by his runaway tongue. He had been as boastful as Mutuk. But, unlike Mutuk, he would not be able to quell the laughing of the villagers if they found him out.

"When will you break the wall?" Kiri asked, looking up at him with a sideways tilt of her head.

"Soon," he answered miserably. "Very soon now."

"My father is giving rewards," she said. "A hero's feast and a great house next to his own. Is that why you will do it?"

He looked at her quickly and knew she was teasing him. Her eyes were turned innocently to the beach, but a soft smile touched her lips. She had a power to annoy him that no one else possessed. He felt the first prickling of anger now. "I will take all that your father offers," he said. "And when I take them, I will mould them to my own design."

Kiri threw back her head and laughed, showing her white teeth. "It will take more strength than you need for breaking the wall," she said. "There is one gift you will find hard to mould."

"A young girl has much to learn," Sisiwa said. "She does not know the strength of men."

Kiri laughed again. "It is enough that she knows how weak they are."

Sisiwa did not know how to answer that. He fingered the cloth of his green lap-lap and frowned down at his feet. Then he said, finally: "This is foolish talk. I will not go on with it."

THEY walked in silence and, somehow, Sisiwa felt very happy. But no matter how sweet the breeze, or how exciting the touch of Kiri's arm as it brushed against him, the wall hung over them both like a bad spirit, squeezing the life from the village.

The old chief had told him about it when he had returned to Lalapipi only a little while ago. He had been long away and knew nothing about

the wall. He had worked with the white soldiers making the great road from Bulldog over the mountains to Wau. And then, when the white soldiers' war had ended, he had worked on the goldfields at Bulolo. He had returned to Lalapipi a rich man, thinking to build a house and raise fat children. But instead he had found a grey cloud of worry.

The white soldiers had built the wall, the old chief said, so that the water would cut through the sandbar of the lagoon and let in their ships. This it had done. But the sharks came in with the ships and chased the fish from the lagoon. And the floodwaters of the river had turned the clear water to yellow and it could not be used for bathing any more. He did not complain, because the white men had been fighting the yellow monkeys. And with so many of the young men away fighting and carrying loads for the white soldiers, there had not been enough men to do the fishing, anyhow.

The white men had been good. They gave food in tins from their big storehouses up the river at Terapo and the fish were not needed. And when the war ended and the young men came back to the village, there was still no need for fishing. They had earned much money with the white men, and the storehouses at Terapo sold them all the food they needed. But such easy living was not good for them. The village gardens were untended. The warriors would not listen to the chief's warning, but followed Mutuk, who had been a great fighter in the white man's war. He had been given a medal by one of the white leaders at faraway Salamaua. He wore it always, pinned to his lap-lap, and had the hair of dead yellow men wound round his arms. He and his followers were too proud to work in the gardens.

Thus they had lived for a long time, forgetting their ancient skills. And now, the disaster the old chief always feared had come to pass. The white trader at Terapo was going away, taking

his food. The village had to catch fish to live now, and if the wall were not broken so the sandbar could heal itself, the lagoon would never succour them again. The village would have to move from the place where all its ancestors rested, suffer their curses and perhaps be forced to fight a tribal war for new land.

"You are silent, Sisiwa," Kiri said, at last.

He halted at the sound of her voice and saw they had come to the edge of the village. Cooking fires gleamed among the trees like golden flowers, and the air was laden with smoke.

"My thoughts were of the village," he said. "And of Mutuk and his fighting men."

"He is very brave," Kiri said, slyly. "And good to look on."

"He is like the crocodile," Sisiwa said. "He lies in the sun all day and waits for his food to come to him."

"And yet he has tried to break the wall."

"Things the white men have built cannot be torn down by muscle alone," Sisiwa said. "And Mutuk has nothing else but muscle."

"He is good to look on," Kiri said again, mischievously. "And he is stronger than the crocodile." Then she turned and ran off into the village, laughter streaming behind her.

Sisiwa stood in the darkness, wondering at the pain in his chest. For he had not known before that laughter could hurt so much.

That night, he squatted without speaking by the mosquito fire trench outside the single men's lodge. The smoke from the green coconut husks and palm branches stung his eyes, but he stared unblinkingly into the dull heart of the fire.

All about him was chatter. The younger men talked of canoe races and hunting, and their adventures with girls. The fighting men, ranged about Mutuk, chewed betel and lime and fought again their battles against the yellow monkeys. As the betel loosened their tongues their talk became louder, and their exploits more daring. And soon the younger men hushed their talk and listened to the warriors, their mouths wide open to hear such tales.

BUT none of this touched Sisiwa. The talk wrapped him round like the smoke, touched him and drifted on into the night. For as he gazed into the fire, a strange excitement stirred in his mind.

He did not know when the idea had first come; but there it was, turning over and over like a netted fish flashing its belly in the shallows. *Things the white men have built cannot be torn down by muscle alone.* The words he had spoken to Kiri kept repeating themselves. *Not by muscle alone.* And suddenly, without warning, he found the answer. He knew how to tear down the wall. There was great danger in it, but that was how it should be when such rewards were offered. He had to use the little bundles of grey mud that had shattered the rocks on the Bulldog road. Only by the white man's own magic could his works be destroyed.

He sucked in his breath and held it for a long moment. He knew a place on the river bank, past Terapo, where the white soldiers had left many boxes of the grey mud. Then he looked down at his hands, lying on his crossed legs, and saw they were shaking.

Mutuk chose that moment to speak. "You have not yet torn down the great wall, Sisiwa," he said. "We have been waiting for you to claim the prize." His deep-chested voice was edged with harshness, and Sisiwa knew that the betel was working in his brain.

"Sisiwa was helping the women sweep the

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BERLIN

THE AUDIENCE WAS TENSE. MORE than 600 crowded the big hall in Oldenburg, a small North-West German town, but the traditional bald heads who regularly attend political meetings were outnumbered by the war veterans—sharp-faced, earnest young men who had obviously aged prematurely and still seemed to be ill at ease in their motley civilian outfits. The bright summer dresses of a few women provided the only spot of colour.

Suddenly shouts went up: "Hoch Remer!" and soon mingled with excited cries of the ominously familiar "Heil!" On the platform appeared the principal speaker: Otto Ernst Remer, ex-Wehrmacht major who had been promoted to the rank of general on July 20, 1944, the day on which he squashed the German generals' plot to kill Hitler and end the war.

Tall and good looking, with a boyish grin which sometimes breaks the studied serenity of his features, Remer appears younger than his thirty-eight years. He is the most prominent and picturesque leader of the "Socialist Reich Party," the neo-Nazi movement which recently gained a surprise success in the provincial election of Lower Saxony. Since then he has been hailed as a new fuehrer.

"Germany Must Rise Again"

"Comrades. . . I" He started his speech in a clipped, military voice. As he spoke his eyes assumed a glassy, remote expression. Though his appearance has little in common with Hitler's, there is no mistaking the resemblance in manner, the half-subdued frenzy, the missionary zeal, the reckless exploitation of popular sentiments, however impossible of practical realization.

"Germany must rise again! We must have our honour and liberty restored!" The policy of the Reich Party which he expounds seems simple. "The occupation troops must get out of Germany!" A burst of frantic applause showed how intensely his audience agreed. His most vicious attacks were directed against the West German Government of Chancellor Dr. Adenauer: "Who is this Adenauer?" he asked with a rhetoric reminiscent of Goebbels. "I'll tell you." With a sneer: "He is just a forwarding address for British, American and French orders. . . ." The audience laughed derisively.

Remer, it is obvious, can hold an audience. With him on the platform were two other Reich Party leaders, Count von Westarp and Dr. Dorls. "Remer is only the figurehead, the rat catcher," a young foreign observer in the audience whispered into the ear of his neighbour. "The other two are the brains." That was the view which foreigners held of Hitler in the twenties. How quickly one forgets how Hitler, the "paid agent of the German Army, the tool of heavy industry," as they called him, rose to make himself fuehrer of his former masters.

Stormtroopers Stand On Guard

The new fuehrer's speeches are short and to the point. During his early election meetings the halls in which he spoke were guarded by a posse of fierce men in army jackboots, the stormtroopers of the Reich Party. Although they have since been banned as a military formation by the Adenauer Government, they still stand guard at his meetings, as menacing and watchful as ever. They have taken of their jackboots, but any heckler who ventures to contradict Remer soon finds himself surrounded and forcibly ejected if he does not shut up quickly.

After the meeting Remer mounted his motor bicycle as usual, to race through the night to Varel, his home town where he shares two rooms and a kitchen with his wife and three children. Remer—and this alone distinguishes him from Hitler—is a family man. His eldest boy, now ten, is one of his greatest admirers; he

Otto Remer treads in Hitler's footsteps

by WILLI FRISCHAUER

The "Heils" and the half-subdued frenzy are the same. And the way the Germans are falling for it seems to be the same, too



Remer addresses a rally. They say he is only a figurehead. But they said the same of Hitler

loves to turn the pages of father's scrapbook with photographs, Press notices and letters which reveal the career of Germany's postwar Hitler.

The first picture shows grandfather Remer in army uniform, holding up the two-year-old Otto before going off to fight for the Kaiser in the first World War. There are pages with photographs of the growing boy, already towering over his classmates, and then one in which he is proudly wearing German uniform for the first time. Underneath is an inscription which merely says "1933"—the historic year of Hitler's rise to power.

At the age of twenty, young Otto Ernst Remer had become a professional soldier. Intelligent, disciplined, eager, straining for a fight, he was

an obvious recruit for Hitler's favourite Wehrmacht regiment "Gross Deutschland" (Greater Germany). Of the regular troops, the men of Gross Deutschland were closest to the Nazi Party. With them Remer went into action as soon as the war broke out in 1939. He was a major and battalion commander in 1944 when his battalion was recalled from the Eastern front to provide the military guard for the Wilhelmstrasse, the Whitehall of Berlin.

The atmosphere in Berlin was electric. The German capital was writhing under the attacks of the R.A.F. Remer's men patrolled the streets, picking a way through rubble which it had become impossible to move. At Berlin's military H.Q. he was told that the utmost vigilance

was necessary. Already there were rumours that astute generals, realizing the war had been lost, might try to get rid of Hitler, whom they regarded as responsible for the failure of German arms. "If there is danger of unrest," Remer was told, "we shall declare a state of emergency. Watch out for the code command: Valkyrie!"

Remer has given me an elaborate description of the day in 1944 from which he emerged as a German hero, the faithful soldier who saved the Fuehrer. He was cruising in a staff car on July 20, alert, watchful, his hand on the holster of his large Luger pistol. "At 2.30 p.m.," he said, "I received the word—Valkyrie."

At headquarters, General Haase, military commander of Berlin, informed Remer: "The Fuehrer—victim of a fatal accident. Internal unrest has broken out. The army assumes control. Your battalion is to seal off the government quarters hermetically." Remer clicked his heels dutifully. But as he withdrew to carry out General Haase's orders, he stopped to think. "I have seen no signs of unrest," he said to himself. Nobody, he pondered, had told him who was the Fuehrer's successor. Why should the army take over and not the whole of the armed forces?

Dramatic Phone Call To Hitler

Remer was a regular soldier. But, at heart, he was a Nazi first. There was something suspicious about the situation, he thought. He did not know as yet that a group of generals had struck against Hitler. In the Fuehrer's H.Q. in Rastenburg, East Prussia, a bomb had been planted by a high staff officer who, as soon as he heard it go off, was convinced that it had killed Hitler. With that he had flown to Berlin to join his fellow conspirators, who had established themselves in the War Office.

Instead of obeying Haase's orders, Remer decided to see Goebbels, one of the few Nazi leaders in Berlin at the time. "There is not a word of truth in all this!" Goebbels told Remer. "Wait a minute and you can speak to the Fuehrer over my private telephone line." A few seconds later Hitler's voice came over the wire. "Major Remer," it said, "can you hear me, do you recognize my voice? This is the Fuehrer speaking. Believe me, I am alive!"

Remer stood to attention. "I await your orders, my Fuehrer," he said deferentially.

"A clique of cowardly officers has tried to kill me," Hitler shouted over the telephone. "We shall exterminate these vermin. I charge you to take all measures necessary for order and security in Berlin. Until Himmler arrives you are to break all resistance, if necessary by force!"

Berlin Was In His Power

Major Remer's unit, fully motorized, equipped with panzers and heavy artillery, was an irresistible military force in Berlin. With his help General Haase, who was one of the conspirators, could have conquered Berlin for the rebels, whose plan was to arrest the Nazi leaders and ask the Western Allies for an armistice. Even though Hitler escaped the bomb—he was only slightly wounded—the war would have been at an end.

Instead, acting in unison with Goebbels, Remer took the toughest men of his battalion to the War Office. "I told Dr. Goebbels," he recalls, "that he could rely on me and my men. Every one of my officers had proved himself in battle. My men were ready to fight and to die with me."

No sooner had Remer disappeared behind the doors of the War Office than shots could be heard inside. Later, it appeared that high-ranking generals had been shot on the spot. "I did not shoot any of them myself," Remer told me a little diffidently. Others were placed under arrest. A few hours later Himmler, the Gestapo chief, arrived. A wave of terror followed. Hundreds of officers were shot. Thousands were sent to concentration camps. Remer's action had been instrumental in suppressing the plot.

Next day he was flown to Hitler, who

personally promoted him to the rank of major-general. In his scrapbook, beside newspaper reports of his great day, is his picture as a senior officer. "General Remer," said a headline, "has saved the honour of the German Army."

Wherever he went he was cheered. Goebbels was determined to build him up as a popular hero to succeed Field Marshal Rommel. The end, however, came sooner than Remer expected. With the surrender of the German armies in May, 1945, he joined the men of his regiment behind the barbed wire of an Allied prison stockade. He admitted quite frankly to me that, in captivity, he was already planning a political career. "There were thousands of soldiers like me," he said, "who felt that everything should be done to refute the insults and accusations which were hurled at the great German Army. . . ."

Promises Of Secret Support

After his release Remer joined his wife in Varel, a north German town which was proud to receive the "hero." For a few days he worked on a building site. Did he remember that Hitler, too, had once earned his living as a builder in Vienna? "I wanted to get close to the people," Remer said later on. He did not lay many bricks—except such as could become the basis of a successful political future.

Drawing unemployment benefit in Varel and touring the countryside on his motor bicycle, Remer soon established contact with former officers who felt and thought very much as he did. They were not as yet prepared to come out into the open with their views, but promised Remer secret support. For a while, the professional politicians regarded the fierce, uninhibited ex-general as a liability. Whatever their intention, they felt that his phraseology was embarrassing, liable to rouse awkward memories. "Within two years we shall march again," he told the audience of a meeting which he boldly gate-crashed.

But his time came in 1948. He first allied himself with a small, extreme Rightist party, then drifted away to found a new organization, the Socialist Reich Party. It is a measure of the change which has come over the political atmosphere in Germany that Remer is now a coveted speaker on many platforms. A new surge of nationalism is sweeping Germany, and the whispers which hinted that Hitler was "not so bad after all" have grown into loud voices. Dr. Adenauer's Bonn Government is vainly trying to cope with the radicals, fearful lest any sharp measure against them might antagonize the more moderate nationalists on whom the Government relies for support.

When Remer's activities and speeches aroused resentment abroad Dr. Adenauer moved, and had Remer indicted for "insulting the legal government of Germany." A court in Verden sentenced him to four months' imprisonment—a welcome opportunity for Remer to crown himself with a martyr's halo and to draw another parallel with Hitler, who was sent to prison by a German Republican court in 1923.

Appeal To Former S.S. Men

The Reich Party, in the meantime, goes from strength to strength. With Remer's help, it polled more than 360,000 votes in Lower Saxony, where seventeen deputies now represent his ideas in the provincial diet. Remer appeals to former Nazis and ex-S.S. men to join the party and success has brought many new followers. For the time being, Remer denies that he has any authoritarian ambitions, but then Hitler, too, sought a mandate by democratic procedure.

"Hitler was a front-line soldier," Remer says. "So was I." Hitler became the scourge of Europe. Remer, if allowed to carry on unchecked, may easily follow in his footsteps. There may be quite a few alarming exhibits in his scrapbook before another dramatic chapter of Germany's history comes to a close. THE END



Remer shows a wartime picture of himself, taken at the time he smashed the plot against Hitler



Snapshot of Remer working as a bricklayer. His policy sounds simple: End the German occupation



Family man Remer at home. Sent to prison, he can recall: "All this happened to Hitler, too"

WHAT GIRLS ARE FOR

Continued from page 7

that you can't run a gang on that.

You had to arm chaps that had no guns—and the ones you couldn't overawe by exceptional strength or daring, you had to give things to. I often thought if only I had a shilling a week instead of a penny I could have bought over sufficient forces to clear not only the avenue but the whole road, and make our territory impregnable from the sea-front to Tram Terrace.

That was really why I used to make what I called Viking raids and Biddy called stealing. It wasn't stealing really; it was all for the gang funds. She had endless places she used to hide her money in, but sometimes I found it even then, and she went screeching to father. "He took my penny—boo-hoo-hoo!"

It was disgusting. Though she knew better than to tell mother when I made Viking raids on the housekeeping money, she used to be always at me in a low, blood-curdling voice, following me round like an old witch. "You'll be caught yet, Willie Jackson. The police will be up to you. You took three shillings out of mummy's purse. God sees you." Sometimes she drove me so wild that I went mad and twisted her arm or pulled her hair or made smithereens of her old dolls, and then she went off, screeching again, and I got clouted. I got more cloutings through her than through anything else. I hated her.

It was while I was worrying about the gang that we had a baby. Frankie was small and fat and nearly always in good humour, and whenever he saw Biddy or me he laughed himself sick. He always thought when you covered him up that he was losing his toes and would start looking to see what had happened to them.

"Toes, Frankie!" I'd say, and first he'd look at his hands and give them a chew to see that they were the real article, and then he'd begin working his arms and legs, cross-eyed with excitement till he had the last stitch of clothes off him and could see his toes again.

I was allowed to lift him when he had wind, but Biddy wasn't, because she was still too small. Yet, in spite of that, she was the one he liked best. It was a bit of a disappointment to me. He knew her very step on the path, and he'd try to lift himself, and then make a queer coughing little noise that he used only to draw our attention. It was different from the way he coughed when he was hungry, because then he was usually cross, but this other cough was all a joke. Biddy came up then and coughed back, and they went at it till he was exhausted. After that he shook his head at her, and that was a signal for her to waggle her pigtailed at him. When she shook her head they danced from shoulder to shoulder. Frankie goggled, trying to follow them, till he ended up with his two eyes looking different ways.

But when he grew a little older, it became a nuisance. He wouldn't even take a bottle except from her, and when she wasn't around and we couldn't get her, he kicked up a terrible row. In the end, if Biddy wanted to do anything or go anywhere, she had to take off her shoes and whisper, and even then he could sometimes recognize the whisper and you'd hear him in the bedroom, beginning to cough. . . .

Then he got a bad cold—it was

looking for his toes when there was nobody around that brought it on—and, one night, Biddy woke me and whispered fiercely into my ear.

"Willie," she said, "our Frankie is ill. I hope he's not going to die."

"How do you know he's ill?" I asked.

"That's not a right scream at all," she said. "Listen to it!"

I listened and, sure enough, it frightened me. I got up and went to the door of mother's room.

"Is Frankie ill, Mummy?" I asked.

"I think he's got a bit of a cold," said mother lightly. "Run back to bed now or you'll be getting another. Frankie will be better in the morning."

He wasn't better in the morning. He was all hot and choking and his face was very red. Miss Regan, the health visitor, was called in, and she thought it better to send for the doctor. Biddy and I stayed for a while with him in the big bedroom, but he wouldn't play with us at all. Biddy tossed her pigtailed and just once he smiled and made a little motion of his head, but all at once he began to wail, and you could almost hear him telling you that he was too sick to play. When mother tried to give him a drink he screamed and pushed it away, and it was from Biddy he took it at last. We had to go to school, and I went in misery, wondering if he'd be dead before I got back. Life without that baby seemed impossible.

The doctor came in the afternoon, and I knew from the way he spoke to mother that Frankie was very bad.

I didn't know what to do with myself. It was terrible watching him trying to get his breath, coughing and choking and terrified out of his wits, and not to be able to do anything for him. Mother went into town to get the medicine the doctor ordered.

I went out to play, but every five or ten minutes I went mooching back with a sense of guilt on me until at last Miss Regan shouted at me not to be all the time opening the bedroom door. Then I went to the front door and started to cry all to myself. The road was almost empty and there was no one to watch my tears. I realized then the hollowness of being Chief Gang Leader.

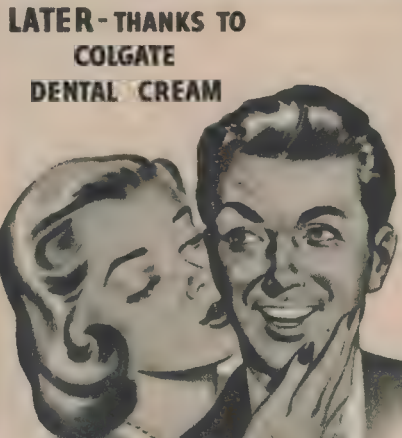
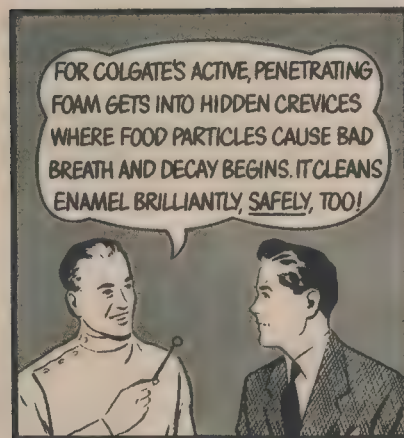
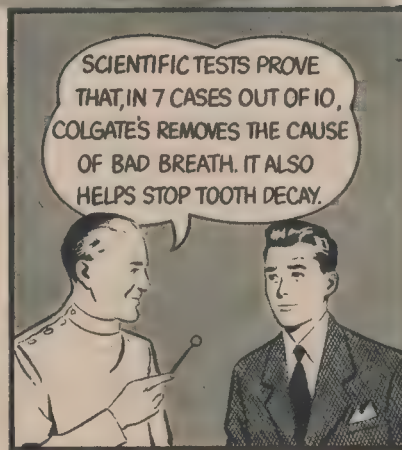
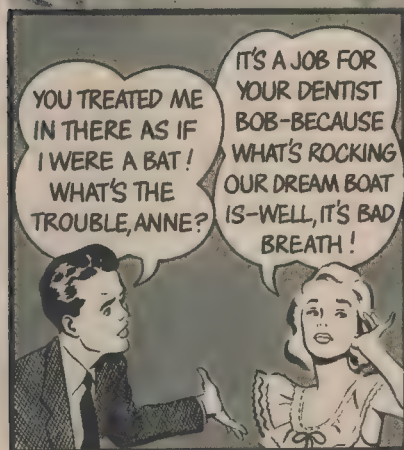
Miss Regan came out to see if my mother was coming and saw me crying. "What are you crying for?" she asked brusquely.

"Frankie's going to die," I said, and I was so babyish with grief that I turned and put my head in her skirt and my arms about her legs.

"God is good, child," she said, patting me on the head, but that did not comfort me. I never yet heard anyone say that God was good unless they meant that He'd need to be. And when she went in again I made the sacrifice of my life and promised Him that if only Frankie didn't die I'd give up the Viking raids and hand over the position of Chief Gang Leader to Ernie Thompson.

I felt a fellow couldn't do more. If God didn't pay attention to that, He'd never pay attention to anyone.

Then my mother came in from town with a bottle and a jar with a spout. I heard her and Miss Regan discussing the way you should use it. They put medicine and boiling water in the jar and put the spout to Frankie's lips, but the moment they did, it started him coughing, and he went black in the



Clean
Your Breath While
You Clean Your Teeth—
AND HELP STOP
TOOTH DECAY



1/6 also Giant Size 2/3



"So you're the Mrs. Todd I've repeated so much about!"

face, screaming and waving his arms.

"Let me try him," said Miss Regan quietly, and she took Frankie herself, but he only got worse. Biddy was sitting, watching them and saying nothing.

"You're only choking him, Miss Regan," she said all at once. "If you'd give him to me, I'll have a try," said Biddy.

"Silly girl! What could you do more than the rest of us?" replied Miss Regan.

"She's very good with him all the same," said my mother. "He'll do things for her he wouldn't do for me."

"I suppose it'll do no harm, anyway," said Miss Regan.

She put Frankie on Biddy's knee, and Biddy took the spout of the jar in her own mouth and began coughing like mad.

Frankie gave her a look. The poor kid seemed to think he was missing something special.

"Frankie try now!" she said, and she put the spout of the jar in his mouth again, but again he choked and began to wail.

"It's no good," said my mother distractedly. "The poor child would be safer in bed."

"Let her alone now, ma'am," said Miss Regan, watching Biddy with a smile, and I saw that she really thought Biddy was being quite clever with him.

BIDDY didn't wait for any orders. The moment Frankie began to cry, she put the jar back in her own mouth and coughed again, and Frankie turned round and looked up at her. He couldn't make out for the life of him what fun she got out of it, but he felt that there must be something in it for him. Next time he coughed, Biddy coughed louder, and this time he didn't cry. It was extraordinary the way she got him quietly sucking away at the jar.

"Pon my soul," said Miss Regan with amusement, "you'd think he knew what she was saying. Do you know, Mrs. Jackson, if I were you I'd light a fire in her room and leave him along with her tonight."

"And supposing he got a bad turn?"

"You'd hear him just the same," said Miss Regan. "I think he might rest easier with her around."

That night our room felt grand with the big, roaring fire that father stoked down and the candle lighted

by Biddy's bed. But it wasn't so grand when I tried to get to sleep. Frankie was getting worse all the time. Every five or ten minutes he had his fits of choking and screaming, and several times they were so bad that either father or mother came in to see how he was. I was a very heavy sleeper and it took a lot to wake me, but that did it, and somehow, when I woke, I was too sleepy to be sorry for him or for anyone, only myself, and I wished that God would make up His mind quickly about whether He wanted me to be Chief Gang Leader or not.

Biddy didn't seem to mind so much; she wasn't such a heavy sleeper, and she seemed to hear every sound. It was nearly morning when I woke and saw her sitting by the fire in her nightdress with Frankie on her lap, turning his head to see where the candlelight was coming from. She was giving him his inhalation; although mother had told her to knock on the wall, she had boiled the kettle herself.

Then father came in with a dressing-gown wrapped round him, and he just stood and nodded at her two or three times.

"Shall I get you the boiling water for his inhaler?" he asked in a meek little voice that didn't sound like daddy's at all.

"I got it myself, Daddy," she said, and, to my astonishment, he only nodded again.

"Good girl!" he said. "I'll put him back in the cradle for you now."

"No, Daddy," she said, "I'll bring him into my own bed. He won't get so frightened there."

"You might be right," said my father thoughtfully. "I'll put a bottle in for you."

And away with her across the room with Frankie in her arms and father not saying a word to her. The girl was breaking every rule and, instead of being ticked off, she had everyone waiting on her, hand and foot, and only dying to get more orders from her.

Even the next day when the doctor came she had to be in the room with him for fear Frankie would get frightened, and I noticed that he gave his instructions first to her and then to mother. As he went out, he said to mother: "That's a smart little girl of yours, but I wouldn't let her tire herself too much."

Mother put her to bed, but once

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she went, Frankie kicked up a row again. Whenever mother or Miss Regan went near him he only screeched. The child was mad with rage, and they were afraid to cross him for fear of putting him into convulsions.

Biddy heard him even in her sleep, and while Miss Regan and mother were both singing songs to him, trying to keep him quiet, the door opened and in came Biddy with her hair over her eyes and her lids glued together with sleep.

You could see she didn't know where she was, but she couldn't keep away from the child. I was full of pride in her then and really sorry about smashing up her old dolls. I suppose it was on them really that she practised it.

That night was the worst of all. Whatever the doctor had told her, Biddy made up her mind not to take her eyes off Frankie, she just sat up in bed with her hands round her knees or lay back, trying to look at a couple of comics my father had brought her. He was in a couple of times to stoke the fire and see if there was anything she wanted, and then I fell off asleep. Suddenly she woke me. Again it was coming on to morning, for the dawn was just peeping in the window.

"Willie!" she whispered, "Willie, wake up! Frankie's better."

"All right," I groaned. "Let me



alone." I was still half asleep.

"But listen, can't you? Listen!" And then she gave a small cough, and I heard an answering cough from the cradle.

At that, I got up at once: Biddy was sitting by the cradle, just looking at the baby. She had a peculiar soft look on her face. I thought maybe she was still half asleep like I was. Then she wagged her head and began

to toss her hair from side to side.

Frankie smiled and tossed his own head three or four times. You could see the kid was better. The first thought in my mind was: I'm not Chief Gang Leader any more, and just for the moment I felt a bit sorry for myself, but then I realized that I wasn't really sorry at all, and the thought went to my head.

"I'm going to tell mummy," I

shouted and made for the door.

"No, no!" Biddy said, starting to whine. "You mean, dirty thing. I should tell her."

But she spoke too late, for I had dashed into the big bedroom, and at my first words my father leaped out of bed and came thumping after me.

"What's up, Biddy?" he asked.

"That mean thing," Biddy said, pointing at me with one hand, while she rubbed her eyes with the other. "He went in and told you, and he wouldn't let me tell you, and it was I made Frankie better, and he never did anything at all. Boo-hoo-hoo!"

"I did do anything at all," I shouted, wild with the injustice of it. "I promised God to give up the gang if He made Frankie better."

"You little puppy!" my father said angrily. "Couldn't you let the child come in herself?"

"I only wanted to tell you quick," I said, and threw myself on the other bed and began to cry, too.

"Of all the families!" said my mother, raising her hands to heaven. "Aren't you ever done squabbling? And none of you caring whether the child is better or not."

But it was all just like old times, and I saw that, Chief Gang Leader or no Chief Gang Leader, I would still be persecuted by that girl for the rest of my days. That, I suppose, is mainly what girls are for.

THE END

VENETIAN BIRD

Continued from page 14

had offered him a pistol but, again, he had refused.

They swung through the maze of canals beyond the house and were soon out on the lagoon north of the city. After a while, they turned out of the lagoon into the main canal of Murano. The place was unimpressive; quiet grey houses and buildings with a narrow strip of cobbled walk along the canal, and an air of gentle decrepitude. He paid off the gondola at the steamboat stage and went ashore. He walked up the narrow cobbled strip, passing a café, a cabinet-maker's shop, the dark alley entrances to two glass factories and then, almost at the bridge which spanned the canal, another alleyway with a white-and-black notice-board plugged to the wall. It read: *Vetveria Orfeo*. A few steps beyond was another café. He went in and sat close to the door where he could watch the alley mouth.

WHEN Mercer had stepped into the gondola at the canal edge by Rosa's house, Cassana—the street photographer who was employed as a police spy to shadow him—had been watching from the shelter of a lean-to against the wall of the furniture factory on the opposite bank. He had recognized Mercer at once, recognition made easy because he had known that he had returned to Venice and had gone to Rosa's house.

He smiled as the gondola drew away. He gave it five minutes' start and then went down to the water and got into a skiff moored at the canal side. He rowed slowly after the gondola, pulling his raincoat collar up against the sudden rain-squalls. Mercer, he was thinking, was a most interesting character. Interesting because it was still far from certain what he was after. And stupid, too. A man who had left Venice once and come back might do the same thing again. He had taken a chance on that, knowing how easy it would be for a man to get off the train at Mestre and catch a bus back. Four

boring hours at the bus-station had brought their reward.

He whistled as he rowed, and, looking back at the broken line of Venice against the darkling sky, he found himself pleased with the picture. It was unusual, a grey, rather sinister city now, no brightness, no heat, no longer a gilded mirage; just a dark raft afloat on the steely waters.

MERCER heard the steamer come in and then after a little while the sound of voices. He went to the door. A party of sightseers with a guide was coming along the walk. The guide kept a little ahead of them, like a chief with his tribe behind him. They turned into the alley leading to the entrance of the Orfeo Works. Mercer followed them, moving unobtrusively into the tail of the party.

The guide led them through a small door into a long showroom, its walls lined with wooden shelves on which the products of the factory were displayed. Down its length, long tables were set out with glassware. The crowd broke up and wandered around the room.

Mercer stood undecided, listening to their cries of delight as they toured the room. A factory salesman, who had been talking to the guide, broke away and moved among the crowd, explaining that everything was for sale and when they had seen the foundry they were welcome to come back and buy.

Mercer listened to him as he went rapidly over the history of glass-making. The count was to be here at six for an important meeting. As he owned the place, the meeting would probably take place in his own office or room, and that was most likely to be somewhere above the ground floor. Through a half-open doorway at one end of the room, Mercer glimpsed a staircase.

He waited until the salesman's attention was taken by a couple who were debating a choice of coloured glass figures and slipped through the half-open door. He went quietly up the stairs and found himself in a long, well-lit room whose large windows

looked out towards the lagoon and the straggle of buildings on the marshy edge of the island. Here, too, there were shelves and tables of glassware, but the floor was crowded with packing-cases. Straw, paper and strips of wood littered the floor.

At the far end of the room, one of the corners had been cubed off by a half-glass, half-wood partition to form a small office. The long panes of glass, rising from about breast height, had been given a light wash of white paint to ensure privacy for whoever worked within the room. A small door set in the side facing Mercer was marked in black lettering—*Direttore*.

Keeping close to the windows, he moved down the room until he was at the partition. Edging round a pile of crates, so that he was screened by them and confined in the narrow angle between the outer wall of the room and the partition, he listened. There was no sound from within the office. Examining the pane of glass before him, he saw that in one of its lower corners the paint had begun to peel away. He picked delicately with his fingers at a loose curl and exposed a ragged segment of plain glass the size of his thumbnail. He half-crouched and looked through.

INSIDE the office were two men: Count Boria and the naval officer, Longo, in civilian clothes. The count was seated at a table, going through a business file. He was completely absorbed, leaning forward as he read and tapping his teeth with the end of a silver pencil. Longo was seated behind him near the one window which served the office. His chair was tilted and, although Mercer could hear no sound, his lips were half-pursed as though he were whistling gently to himself. Across his knees was a rifle which he was cleaning and oiling. After a moment, he dropped his chair square to its legs and said something to the count, who nodded. To Mercer there came only a low murmur of sound, undistinguishable as words.

Mercer watched them for a while, then he straightened up to ease his

cramped legs. The sound of footsteps from the stairway at the far end of the room made him drop quickly into hiding behind the piled cases. Through the overflow of straw and paper-filling from the crate against which he huddled, he could watch part of the room. He saw the salesman come through the door, sling an order book on to a rough desk by one of the tables and then cross to a small cupboard against the far wall. He took out a hat and a raincoat, humming gently to himself. Then he came down to the office door. He gave a brief knock and opened it.

"The place is empty now, signor. Do you wish me to wait still?"

Mercer heard the count reply: "Yes, you must wait. He cannot be long now." His voice was testy, impatient.

"Very good, signor." The salesman closed the door and came back through the room. He stopped at his desk and made a brief gesture of disgust. He stood there for a moment, undecided, before lighting a cigarette and going away to the stairs. He disappeared with a noisy clatter of feet.

Mercer made himself comfortable behind his crates and decided that he must wait, too. Somebody was coming to see the count. He wanted to know who it was. He might not be able to hear what the stranger would say, but at least he would see him. He waited patiently.

Footsteps sounded on the far stairs and the salesman came into the packing-room again. With him was a short, dapper-looking man with a thin moustache. Mercer had never seen him before. He wore a loose coat over a navy-blue suit and carried a briefcase under his arm. They crossed the room and Mercer heard the office door open and the scuffle of feet and chairs as the two men within rose. There was a confusion of voices in greeting for a moment and then the count's voice came clearly: "There's no need for you to stay now."

He heard the salesman give them good night, the click of the closing door, and then the man came



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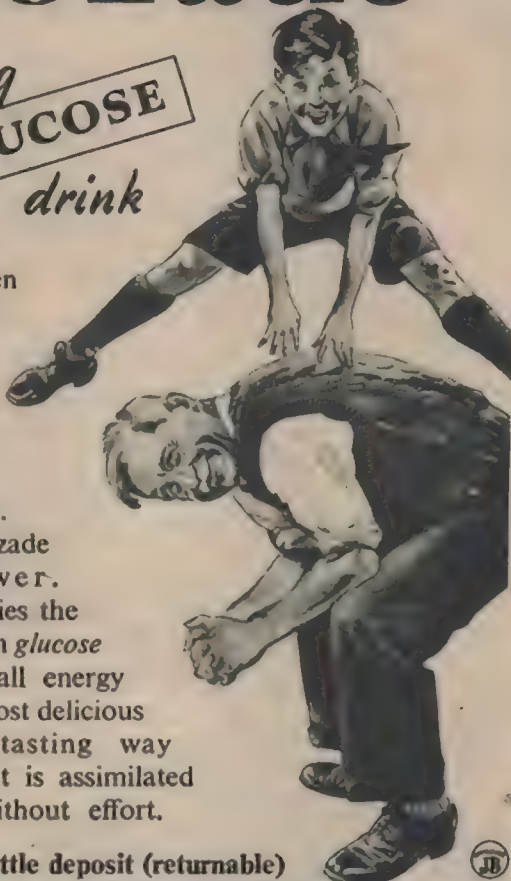
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hurriedly back across the room. He paused to switch off the lights and then his feet hammered on the wooden stairs. A few seconds later Mercer caught the distant slam of a door.

He crouched there in the darkened room and from behind the partition came a low, unintelligible murmur of voices. The pale radiance filtering through the glass panels filled the packing-room with long shadows. He raised himself and looked through his spy-hole.

Longo was standing by the window. The count was leaning back in his chair, a small frown on his forehead, and Mercer had the impression that the man was impatient. The stranger was standing by the table, opening his briefcase and talking. Now and again the count nodded.

It was a dumb show which told Mercer nothing. From his briefcase the stranger took a sheaf of papers, referring to them as he talked, and once he spread out what looked like a map and indicated something on it.

Longo came and examined it, but the count nodded his old head and stared straight before him. Then the man's eyes half-closed and he began to speak, emphasizing his points by touching the palm of one hand with his finger. . . .

MERCER watched it all and slowly he felt an intense irritation rising in him. From some distant church he heard the chimes of a clock strike seven. He stood there with his eye to the glass. The stranger began to shuffle his papers back into the briefcase. The count rose and moved towards the door. They were coming out.

Mercer dropped down behind his crates. He heard the door open. The voices of the men came clearly to him.

" . . . if you weren't pressed for time, Colonel, you could stop and see Uccello for yourself." It was the count, and he spoke with a faint touch of asperity. "He's coming out here this evening to pick up the rifle."

"Yes, yes. I wish I could—but I must get that train. As long as you've got everything arranged for him. . . ."

"Everything. Today, so far as the people he works for in Venice are concerned, he's going off to Turin, visiting a sick mother, and he won't be back for two weeks. Tomorrow he'll do his work here for us and then remain in hiding for two days until he leaves the country. It's a precaution we felt necessary . . . this town will be overrun with police reinforcements in the next few days."

"Yes, yes, that's a good idea. Keep him out of the way." Mercer could hear the half-impatient, half-nervous note in the colonel's voice. A worried man, he thought, involved in an affair which was too big for him to accept comfortably. "Well, I must get off to my train."

"You'll be in good time," said the count as they moved out into the room. "In fact, you need never have come. Everything is in perfect order. There is only one real risk, and by this time tomorrow it will be over. After that, everything is in the hands of our friends in Rome."

As he finished speaking, the telephone in the office began to ring.

"See who it is, Longo." The count came into Mercer's view as he spoke, a tall, stiffly-held figure. He picked up one of the glass ornaments from a table and turned it over in his hand. Mercer heard Longo go back into the office. There was the occasional

murmur of his voice and then he came out.

He stood by the count and Mercer saw the long, tight-lipped face taut with emotion. Then he said very clearly, anger sustaining his voice: "The Englishman, Mercer, has not left Venice. From what I've just been told it's likely that he's in this building now."

It was some moments before the count said anything, then he quietly put down the glass ornament and turned to the colonel.

"The man who was making inquiries about Uccello. I thought he'd left. He seems to be an extremely stubborn person." He nodded towards the end of the room. "Put the light on, Longo. We'll start with this room and go through the factory."

Longo began to walk down the room, threading his way past crates and tables. To Mercer it seemed as though he moved with an agonized deliberation, like a man pushing his way through a tall tangle of weeds. He watched him as though he were hypnotized, his mind numbed so that time dragged itself out, a dreamlike infinity of suspense in which it was easy to believe that Longo would never reach the switch, that the light would never blaze over the white scars of loose packing cases, that the three men would never turn and search and find him. . . . And he was held there, a rat preferring the darkness of its hole to any movement.

Longo switched on the light.

The sudden brilliance was a physical shock which brought Mercer to his feet, a rat now with the belated wisdom of knowing it must run and risk the perils of light if it were not to be annihilated in its hole. And in that moment, standing upright, his body leaning to motion, the whole room was printed on his mind as though by the vicious precision of lightning searing across darkness.

He saw the prism-blurred edge of a chandelier on one of the tables, the words "New York" stencilled on a loose case cover, the milky intaglio of monograms cut into the sleek cheeks of a set of drinking-glasses, and the three men . . . the count's face with a surprised, uncontrolled vacuousness, the colonel with a hand to the top button of his overcoat, one knee raised to save the briefcase under his arm from slipping lower, and Longo, his back to him, a hand still at the switch, the rubbed material of his jacket momentarily colourless from a high sheen across the shoulders.

Then, Mercer was moving. He

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by ROFFE THOMPSON



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swung round a crate and raced down the side of the room.

"Longo!" The count shouted a warning and Longo turned. Mercer had outflanked the other two and he alone stood between him and the door which led into the foundry.

Mercer saw the lean, angry face, the outstretched arms, and he drove his right fist forward as they came together. It took Longo on the side of the face and sent him backwards, lurching with widespread arms, fight-for a balance. He stumbled sideways and hit against the glass-packed shelves on the wall. There was the crash of glass as Longo's flailing arms swept ornaments to the ground. Mercer swung through the door and raced down the stairs. At the foot of the steep flight he could see the light-framed door of the showroom. He went down three stairs at a time. As he reached the bottom he heard the sound of feet thundering behind him.

IN the showroom, he ran around the long display table and made for the door which led out to the courtyard. He threw himself against it, twisting at the handle desperately. It was locked from the inside and his fingers sought wildly for the catch, clumsy and stupid in his haste. He heard a shout from the stairway opening. He turned to see Longo move into the room. The man swept up a great glass bowl from the table and hurled it.

Mercer half-dropped, drawing his head down and throwing up a hand before his eyes. The bowl crashed against the door and splintered into a thousand pieces. On the backs of his hands, Mercer felt the sudden bite of a spray of vicious glass shreds. Then Longo was upon him.

For the next few seconds they were creatures of wild desperation. Longo hit him as he twisted away, and he went back, thudding against the display table, and there sang in his ears the musical ring of vases, bowls and glasses as they swayed and rolled. A pair of hands clamped about his throat, and the long body of the naval officer was flung upon him, forcing him down to the table. Mercer drove upwards with his knee, felt the whistle of the other's pained breath on his face, and then rolled. They crashed across the table in a pandemonium of glass and flailing arms and legs, and the table lurched and swayed drunkenly on its trestles. They hit the ground and broke apart and, as Longo leapt up, Mercer kicked at his legs and sent him tottering backwards to come to rest against the wall shelves.

He drew himself up to one knee, panting. He saw the count and the colonel come to the open stair door, and the movement of the count's hand as it went slowly upwards, holding a revolver. When he could shoot without danger to the others he would.

Mercer swayed to his feet. Longo came at him, and raised in his hands was a great confection of coloured glass shaped to the form of a massive cornucopia. The bare light of the great bulb hanging from the ceiling lavished the multi-curved purple of grapes with high lights, drew a fire from the rose and jade of apples and spilled a moving sheen over the blunt ridges of bananas. The coloured mass hung poised for a moment and then smashed down at Mercer. As it came, he threw himself forward and sideways. The cornucopia shattered on the ground at his side, a vicious explosion that sent sharp fragments scudding into the air whining like angry bees. He hit Longo below

the chin, feeling his fist drive indecently against the warm neck, and the man went down.

"Stand away, Colonel!" The cry was petulant, almost childish, and Mercer, swinging round the table, saw the colonel, who was coming for him with a length of wood, stop. The revolver in the count's hand rose. As it came up covering him, Mercer grabbed a paper-weight from the table and hurled it at the ceiling light, letting the movement of his arm take his body forward, heading for the door.

The light bulb broke with a low, almost human sound, a dry pop like a man belching unexpectedly. A flicker of flame drove through the darkness, the room echoing to the sound of the shot, and Mercer heard the sullen plug of the bullet boring into the plaster of the wall. He found his hands on the foundry door and plunged through into the cavernous darkness, hitting himself against the obstructed gloom.

There was loose ash on the floor, and, half-way down the room, the low light from a single furnace threw a soft glow against the shadows. He ran towards it, stumbling and falling. He heard the men shout behind him, and the count, angry, imperious, calling: "The foundry switch, Longo. Where's the switch?"

He picked himself up and raced past the furnace and in its gentle gleam saw a low door in the far wall. He wrenched at it, and as he closed it behind him, the lights came on. He swung the door shut and, in the darkness as he leaned against it, his fingers found a bolt. He threw it across and moved a step into the room. A few feet from him was a wall with a small window. Through its dirty panes came a feeble light from some lamp in the courtyard.

Someone threw themselves against the door behind him, but for the moment the bolt held. He went to the window and tried it. It was fastened permanently in its frame. He picked up a chair and raised it towards the four small panes that made up the window. As he did so he heard the count call to Longo: "Get round into the yard. The window's the only way for him."

He smashed the chair into the window, jabbing and thrusting at the rotten cross-piecing. He heard the glass strike musically on the stones outside and a gust of cool air flushed into the room.

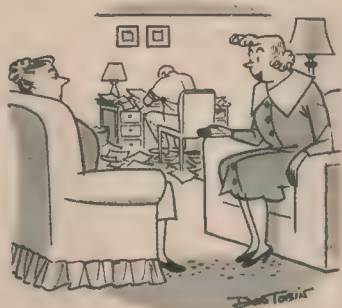
He straddled over the frame, working quickly and precisely now, holding himself clear of the jagged margin of broken glass, and then dropped to cobbles.

CASSANA was standing in the shadows at the alleymouth when he heard the revolver shot. Instinctively his hand dropped into his coat pocket, fingering his own revolver. For a moment he stood there, biting gently at his under-lip, a frown creasing his wet, brown brow.

He turned and, keeping to the side of the wall, moved without hurry towards the arched entrance.

As he reached the archway, he heard the smash of broken glass. He drew back swiftly into the shadows. He saw a man drop from the window and begin to run across the yard. It was Mercer.

He watched him race towards the archway, saw the white circle of a face caught for a moment in the pale gleam from the meagre light which hung over the entrance. Then away to the right the showroom door opened and a hard block of fierce, yellow light wedged into the darkness and was shot with black streaks of



"Frank has a well-balanced plan of sound investment for our future security, but it all hinges on a hundred-to-one shot which he's got in the third race at Bentham Park tomorrow"

rain. A man's figure was silhouetted in the door and he heard a shout.

Mercer came swinging through the arch. Cassana heard the swift, angry breathing. As Mercer passed, he put out his foot and tripped him.

Mercer went down with a sprawling, heavy abandon, his body striking against the wet cobbles with a savageness that drove all the breath from him. He lay there, sick and shaken, not knowing what had happened. He had to get up, to go on, and the desire was an agony of grief in him. He pushed with his hands against the wet stones.

Cassana stepped forward and hit him on the back of his head with his revolver butt. Mercer's body relaxed and his face flopped sideways.

Longo came running up to them. "Dio mio!" Framing his relief, the words echoed harshly against the arch of the gateway. "Thank God you were there, Uccello!"

Cassana laughed and bent down to the body. "Most rats come out the way they go in. Give me a hand with him." He put an arm under Mercer's shoulders to lift him.

SPADONI was worried. He stood at the window of his office and watched the wet gleams of light on the Rio dei Greci. One hand, the fingers stained with nicotine, rubbed at his cheek, and his large body rocked gently on his thin, ludicrous legs.

Luigi, his assistant, sat on the edge of the desk whistling gently against the thin edge of a sheet of paper held against his mouth. It was a teleprint—decoded now—which they had received an hour before.

"If there's any truth in this," said Luigi softly, "there's going to be all hell and high water."

Spadoni swung round slowly, and for a moment his mouth pursed in an ugly grin. "Hell—the Army, and high water—the Navy?"

"If it's true."

Spadoni took the sheet of paper from him and read it again. Then he dropped it on the desk with an impatient gesture and snapped: "'Reliable indications not susceptible to proof, but bearing a circumstantial authenticity which cannot be ignored.' There's a phrase for you! I can see the first-grade secretary who composed it, smacking his lips over the words and then going off for the day feeling he's earned his money. And what does it mean? That there's a whisper, a rumour, a few words spilled out by a stool pigeon or a frightened servant who knows very little but infers much more. In a thing like this you expect leakages. The bigger the plot the more holes to

be plugged. But the more rumours and half-baked information you get the more helpless you are. They sent me up here on a chance. Now they expect results without giving me any facts. Just a theory. A popular figure is going to be assassinated. That'll touch off fireworks which will put this country in a blaze, and then after a few days the interested parties in the Army and Navy will step in and take control. You know what that means—just a bloodbath. And when it's over the Army and Navy chiefs concerned will be in power and running the country. We shall have Fascism again."

"If they fail?"

"They won't fail. Every party will claim him as a martyr. They'll let the Communists, the Democrats, the whole angry bunch, light the fire and set the pot boiling for a few days, and then they'll step in and kick the fire and pot to hell. If it happens, our only hope is to make every political faction see they're being used and have them keep quiet. You know how difficult that will be if a man like the poet Nervi is killed."

He went back to the window and stood there rubbing his hands through his hair. "A police escort, all the precautions in the world can't help if they're really after him. No, the only thing that would help is to get our hands on the assassin now. Easy, isn't it?"

"We could take into custody every likely man in this city within a couple of hours."

"That's what we're going to do. But it still doesn't close the net. The man who's going to do it may be unknown to us, or may already be safely tucked away somewhere. . . ." He turned and came back, standing close to Luigi, frowning and biting at his thumbnail. Then he dropped his hand to his pocket and pulled out a photograph and handed it to Luigi. "I haven't shown you this before. At the back of my mind I thought it was a false line. Now I'm not so sure."

Luigi looked at the photograph. It had been taken by Cassana and showed Mercer, Gufo and Moretto seated on a street bench, talking.

Luigi grinned. "He must have needed company badly. I can pick up Gufo and Moretto in ten minutes, but not him. He's out of the country by now."

Spadoni took the photograph back. "He left on a train for Milan, that's all. He's been mixed up in this kind of thing before. He needs money. He could have come back. You and I and a few men are going down to his friend Rosa's house now."

THE count was growing bored with Longo. Plainly, since Mercer was here, there would have to be a change of plan. But the big, stupid naval officer was standing on his orders. It was just another example of a stupid, tiring tendency one found so often in his kind.

"Uccello will still be the assassin." Longo stood up and came over to the fireplace.

"Of course. But you become a hero and there is no odium attached to me. And over there by the window will be the body of the assassin, Mercer, whom you will have caught in the act and will have shot when he attacked you. A body, lieutenant, without the power of speech, a mercenary Englishman with the blood money tucked into his wallet, and a man, so far as I am concerned, who has already broken into this place and has now used it for his own purposes. A man who can have no

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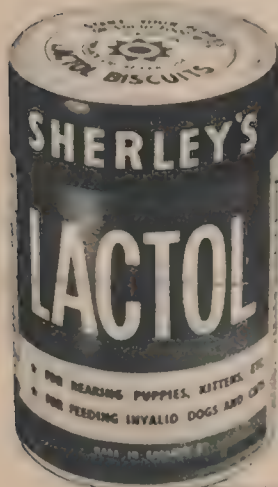
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possible connection with me. From the point of view of convenience, too, it saves us having to kill him some other way and dispose of his body. There's a neatness about it which delights me. Don't tell me that you have objections about playing the rôle of a hero?"

Longo laughed. "If I had, you'd find an argument to overcome them."

"Or that you have any personal feelings about Mercer?"

"No. Shooting him will be easy."

"And when this country is in the hands of a strong government, when we have rid ourselves of milk-and-water democracy and the threat of a proletarian paradise, you will not be forgotten." He watched Longo as he spoke. The man was hard, ambitious with a kind of animal vigour and instinct reminiscent of many of the peasants on his Lucania estates.

"We've got to do something with him. I think what you say is the right way." Longo pulled out his cigarettes and lit one.

"Then we'd better get the details right." The count moved back to his desk. He sat down and smiled at Longo, but there was no humour in the smile.

It might have been five minutes or five hours later when Mercer awoke. There was nothing in the room to help him mark the time, and his hands were tied behind him, denying him a sight of his watch. He rolled over and sat up, muscling his shoulders awkwardly to ease the stiffness from them.

He stood up and walked carefully round the room, working the stiffness from his body. His head was throbbing. He would have given a great deal to have his hands free to rub his eyes, which were sore with sleep grains. There were no windows to the room and from the dampness he guessed that it was below water level. There was one door, a heavy, iron-ribbed structure with a great lock and no handle. He tried it with his shoulder but he might have been butting against the wall itself.

He went and sat down again, noticing for the first time the grey army blanket which had been under him. The blanket, the bolster, the cords about his wrists behind him. . . . He began to remember now. His race across the courtyard at the glass factory. He'd tripped and as he lay there, someone had hit him. And now this place. But between the two, although there was a gulf of time which he could not assess, there were dark, dreamlike impressions. Voices hovering over him. Hands on him and then the purr of a motor and the slap-slap of water and then blackness and sleep again.

A key grated in the lock and Longo, in naval uniform, entered. Behind him, a steep flight of stone steps ran upwards and a sharp bar of sunlight lay rigidly across wall and stairs. Mercer stood up, and as he did so Longo came across to him. The lean, bitter face had a hard, humourless smile.

"If you'd been going to stay with us longer, signor, we should have made you more comfortable."

"Whom do I thank for the blanket and pillow? Not you?"

"No. Count Boria provided those. Perhaps he wanted your last impression of him to be a kindly one." The tight lips were sucked back taut as he finished speaking and the cold, dark eyes never wavered from Mercer's face.

"I'd like to see him." He knew what that was, the desperate hope of being able to make some compromise with the count, a feeling prompted

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by the menace which filled the man before him.

"You're not going to see anyone."

As he finished speaking, Longo jerked his right arm forward with a sudden, savage grunt. His fist took Mercer on the jaw and his head, snapping back, tightened up the throat muscles so that a quick, animal gargle of sound was forced from him. Mercer dropped heavily and lay still.

Longo rubbed his knuckles reflectively for a moment. Then he rolled Mercer over and untied the cords around his wrists. From his pocket he took a pair of thin wash-leather gloves and a long envelope. A little awkwardly, he pulled the gloves on Mercer's hands and then slipped the envelope into the inside pocket of the tweed jacket.

This done, he pulled Mercer's body up to a sitting position and, holding him with one hand, crouched at his side and drew him slowly across his shoulders. He rose, unsteady for a while under the weight, and moved across the room to the stairs.

The sunlight was thick, yellow butter across the worn pillars of the little vestibule at the stairhead. As he crossed it, a warm bumble of voices from beyond the wall poured over him. He put his shoulder against a low door and went up steep, time-worn stairs, twisting, grunting under the weight and hearing the scrape of Mercer's shoes against the wall as he took the narrow turnings. At the head of the stairs, he slid back the bolt on the count's private door.

He went in, the door swinging gently to a close behind him. He slid the body to the ground at the foot of an armchair near the window, where it lay like a collapsed puppet.

At the window, the long, half-drawn curtains ballooned in the warm afternoon air which came through the open lattices. A voice from behind them said with a faint stir of laughter in it, "How long's he good for?" Uccello's head peered round the curtain.

"Long enough."

"Ten minutes should do it now. Cigarette?"

"You can smoke when you get out

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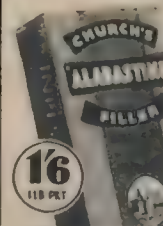
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of this room. Not before!" Longo went to the window.

"An order?" There was laughter under the questioning tones.

"Yes—and keep that damn thing down until you have to use it!"

"Nervous?"

Longo sucked his teeth irritably, watching a gloved finger rubbing the long, black rifle barrel. He made no answer. He looked down at the packed waters of the canal. A thick drift of gondolas and launches nosed gently upstream and the rough free-way between them was like a brown run across a bright cloth where a thread has been pulled.

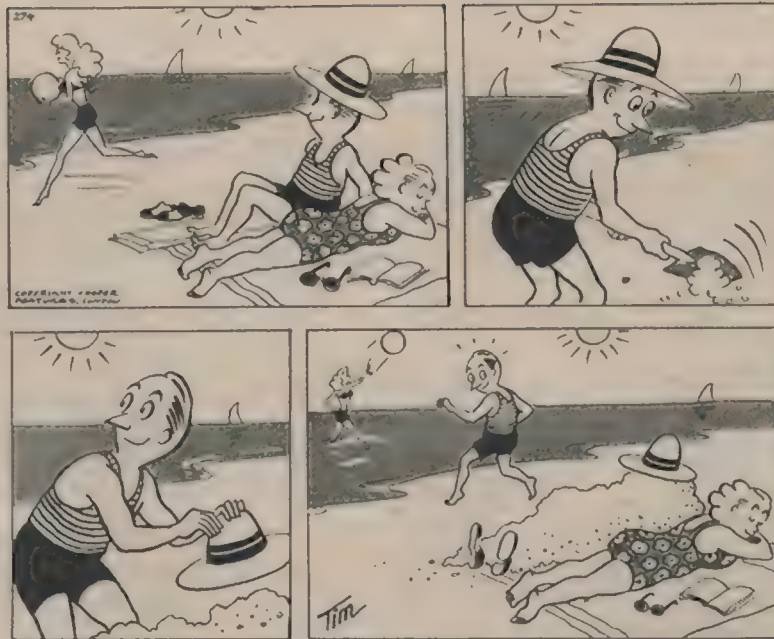
Uccello went on: "Never killed a man before? That's your trouble. I don't blame you. It's not a nice thing to do—the first time. It's better when you're angry or frightened, or even drunk. Better still if he's coming for you. Then at least you have an excuse for the priest—if you worry about that kind of thing. . . . But when he's just lying there like a bag of clover—"

"Shut up!" Longo turned back, looking at Mercer, and his hand went down to his pocket, feeling the hard lines of the revolver. Inside himself, he heard someone praying, a voice that repeated with an angry monotony, *Santa Madre*. . . . His was a dirtier job than Uccello's. They would have to make that up to him. . . .

COUNT BORJA was entertaining a party on the balcony below. His manner showed no trace of the restless excitement inside him as he strolled over to the great run of steps that led down to the water, watching the gondolas packed around the tall mooring posts which bore his colours and arms. Some of the faces in the

OH, JOHNNY!

by TIM



floating crowd turned curiously towards the terrace, watching the movement of well-dressed women and men, the gleam of glasses and silver where Minelli moved among them.

A gondolier in a blue and white shirt called with happy malice: "When Adam dived and Eve span, who was then the gentleman? Viva Nervi!"

The count laughed with them. Then his eyes looked beyond them, up the far reach of the canal. Very soon now Nervi would be coming, sitting with the city officials about him in the State gondola.

Minelli came past the count and he

put his empty glass on the tray.

"Signorina Medova is not here?"

"No, signor."

"Or Tenente Longo?"

"A little while ago he was here, signor."

"Maybe he has gone up to the next floor. One would see better from the windows there. Bring some more glasses, Minelli."

Minelli moved away. At the door, one arm about a pillar, he saw his niece, Ninetta. Her other arm clasped her puppy. Minelli stopped, easing the heavy tray against his chest.

"You should see well from there, *piccino*."

She shook her head. "Do-do can't

see." She lowered her chin to the puppy's head and rubbed it affectionately. "Can't I go to the edge of the terrace?"

He shook his head. "The count would not like it. When the boats come you must hold him up. Do-do will see fine then."

"But there are so many people in front."

He smiled at her. "I will come and lift you both. Stay there and be a good girl."

He went into the palace with his tray.

From beyond the curve of the canal, a slow swell of sound rose in the hot afternoon air, rippling over the heads of the crowd in a strengthening murmur.

UCCELLO said: "They're coming now." Longo stepped over Mercer and stood a few paces from the window. Below him, a mass of bodies swayed with constant, patternless movement. He was quite calm now, the moment racing on him seeming to push a deadening lull before it.

"When you've done, drop the rifle by him and get out."

"Don't worry. I'm not staying to be congratulated."

Two gondolas, high-pooed, ceremonial, four rowers apiece, each man dressed in gold and maroon velvet, swung by under striped oars and then, with a boiling of dirty water, spun about and lay drifting, facing upstream. A husky breath of applause steamed up from the crowd.

Longo saw the black barrel lift in a small arc and settle on the wooden window frame, and he heard the creak of flesh and muscle as Uccello steadied himself on one knee. He moved closer to the window.

To be continued next week

NONE BUT THE BRAVE

Continued from page 21

village," one of the warriors shouted, and a gust of laughter swept across the fire.

"It is no matter for laughter," Mutuk bellowed. "When I take a woman I shall have Sisiwa to sweep my house. He is very clever at such things."

As Sisiwa writhed under the sting of their words, he heard the murmur of the waves on the broken sandbar, and it reminded him that he, too, would be a hero. The thought gave him courage.

"It is well to be clever at things other than killing," he said, quietly.

A dreadful silence fell. No man of the village had ever spoken to Mutuk like that before.

Mutuk rose slowly to his feet. "Little men should guard their tongues," he said. "It is dangerous to speak slightly to warriors."

Sisiwa said, almost to himself: "There are no warriors any more, Mutuk. The war has passed and we are only villagers. It would be wise for everyone to remember that."

The hissing of sucked-in breath ran along the fire trench. The squatting men jerked forward from their hips to stare, and Sisiwa experienced the first stirrings of leadership. He knew that not all the men were warriors. Some of them had been labourers like himself, but none had ever spoken up to the warriors. Now, somehow, he divined they had reacted to his words and would follow him if he showed strength.

Mutuk must have sensed it, too. His lips curled back to show his square, white teeth. His black eyes flashed angrily.

"So the white man's servants, who

worked like women, think they are as good as the fighting men?"

"Not all the white soldiers fought the yellow monkeys," Sisiwa said, boldly. "And yet they were not lowly. They were taubadas like all the others."

Mutuk's hand dropped to his side, and when it came up again a knife flashed in the firelight. "You talk like a foolish woman," he said, slowly. "And for that you will die."

Sisiwa felt the ripple of excitement pass down the lines of men.

"You talk like a foolish man," he said, "and that is worse."

HE thought they would be the last words he would ever speak, for Mutuk was paddling towards him, the knife winking in his hand like the eye of an evil spirit. He turned to face Mutuk. He was unarmed, but unafraid.

Then he heard the voice. It was high-pitched and quavering slightly with age; yet Mutuk stopped his deadly, paddling advance and everyone turned to face it.

The old chief shuffled out from the shadow of the palms. His face was sunken under high cheekbones and his chest was ridged like the wet beach sand when the tide was low. But there was a flash of anger in his eyes that told he was not entirely old.

"There will be no talk of killing among my people," he said. "The time for warring has gone. The weeds grow high and kill the taro in our gardens; the birds and the ants eat our paw-paw fruits. The sharks have chased the fish from the lagoon and the empty tins of the white man's food pile high and the flies dance on them and bring disease."

The young men stirred uneasily. Some dropped their heads and stared

at the ground between their legs.

"You do well to be ashamed," the old chief went on. "You are fat and lazy from not working. The white man's storehouse at Terapo is going away and the village will die for want of food. By night you chew betel and boast how you fought the yellow monkeys and what heroes you are. And by day you lie in the sun, with the headaches from betel making you sick like babies. And now you want to fight. I say to you, if you fight you shall go from the village for ever."

The old chief swung round and walked off. Mutuk and Sisiwa turned slowly away without speaking, and the young men by the fire trench threw their prodding sticks on the fire and followed.

Sisiwa awoke before sunrise the next morning and ran swiftly through the dreaming village to where two of his friends lay sleeping. He shook them awake and told them of his plan.

That day, starting before the village was awake, they paddled far up the river to the place in the jungle beyond Terapo, where Sisiwa knew there were many boxes of the grey mud. They glided back on the river's current, the canoe low with the weight of boxes, using their paddles only to steer.

NEXT morning they were up before the sun. Squatting on the cool sand of the beach, where they had left the boxes the night before, Sisiwa tied the bundles of grey mud together with grass ropes. He had seen the white soldiers do this when they wanted to blow down the big mountain trees. The bundles were tied together and hung round the tree like a necklace and all the fire strings

were brought together and lit at once.

He pushed the fire strings into the hollow ends of the dets and fixed them tightly by squashing the ends flat with his teeth. He did this carefully and with fear, because he knew the power of the little tubes. Then he pushed the dets into the grey mud and brought the fire strings together, making them long because he had to fix the necklaces below the water.

All through the morning Sisiwa and his two companions worked at the wall, fixing the necklaces and tying the fire strings to the posts with grass rope. As Sisiwa dived into the muddy water, the others smacked the surface with paddles and chanted the magic songs that kept sharks and crocodiles away.

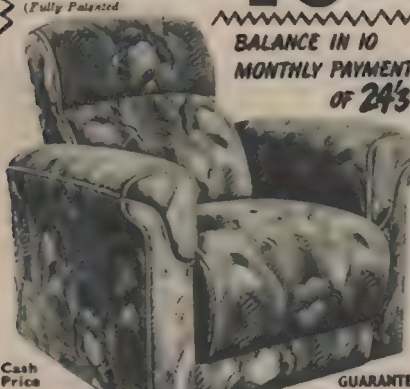
And as the sun climbed higher in the sky, they could see people gathering on the beach. By the time Sisiwa had finished his task and hauled himself, panting, into the canoe, the whole village seemed to be there. He signalled to his companions and they dug their short, wide paddles into the water.

No sooner had the canoe touched shore than Mutuk stepped forward. He pointed at Sisiwa and laughed. "The little man thinks to use the white man's magic to destroy the wall. But all he will do is destroy himself."

"I am ready to die for my brothers and sisters of the village," Sisiwa said.

A murmur rose from the villagers and Sisiwa heard hisses of admiration. He looked at the old chief and saw that he was smiling slightly. "You speak like a true hero, Sisiwa," he said. "Go to your task. And when you return there will be

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feasting and marriage for you. Go now and there will be no more talk about this magic and that."

Sisiwa and his two companions paddled steadily out to the wall. While his companions held on, Sisiwa scratched the thick fire stick on the box and held it to the first clump of fire strings. They sputtered into life, burning hard and white in the sunshine. The canoe was shoved clear and the paddles bit deep into the water, flashing in and out desperately to get away. Then the vast roaring of the grey mud behind them. They turned and saw the water thrown high in the air, and in it were pieces of wood from the wall.

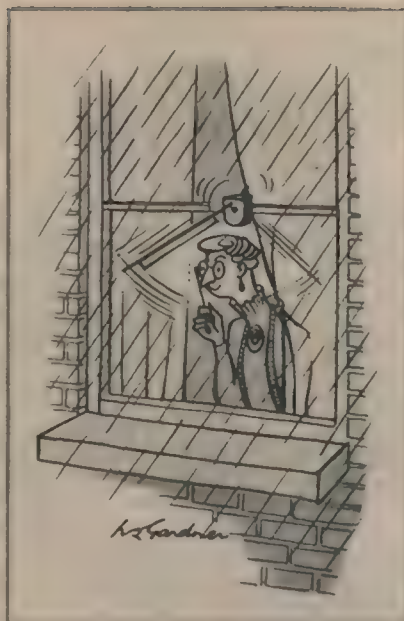
THE water column hung for a moment, then dropped back into the lagoon. A huge wave lumped up and raced towards them, and they had only just enough time to turn the canoe head-on and save themselves from swamping. Smaller waves followed and the torn body of a tiger shark floated past on its back. Wood bobbed about in the current and the great wall sagged about its smashed post.

They went back and lit the fire strings on the next post, then again paddled madly away. The wave chased and caught them, then passed on to dash itself against the beach. The wall sagged still farther, and they could see it was in its death throes. Cheering came thinly from the land, then the sound of singing. They were chanting a victory song already.

Again and again they set off the magic of the grey mud and great holes appeared in the wall. The bodies of many sharks floated on the surface of the lagoon now, and even that of a crocodile, tempted from the river by the smell of blood. The water foamed as the killer sharks fought over the bodies, tearing them and staining the water with crimson.

Sisiwa motioned to them with his right hand, and said: "When the wound in the sandbar heals and the water is clear again, we will hunt down the sharks and kill them. Then the lagoon will be free of them always."

His companions nodded and their eyes glistened, for he was their leader in everything now. They came alongside the wall for the last time. Sisiwa lit the fire strings and shoved the canoe clear. But even as he turned to take up his paddle, he saw that the fires had died out. They



edged back and once more Sisiwa brought out one of the big fire sticks and lit the strings.

The hard, bright fires ran slowly and then, as he watched, jumped down one string quicker than his eye could follow, almost down to the water line.

Before they had gone a canoe's length the noise of the explosion deadened their ears and the rushing wind beat the breath out of their bodies. Sisiwa felt the canoe heave under him, felt himself flying upwards towards the sun where there was only blackness. And then the cold shock of water and himself going down and down. He knew that death was close. He kicked out and fought his way back to the surface.

The canoe was floating, upturned, a little way off. He swam towards it and then he saw two other swimmers. Together they clung to the canoe, their bodies numb and their minds slow from the noise and the rushing air, too numb and too slow even to worry about the killer sharks circling beyond them, still frightened by the noise—but only for a little time. Then they would dart in and there would be no one clinging to the canoe.

SISIWA did not know how long he had been there when he felt strong hands grab him. They lifted him out of the water and laid him on the bottom of a canoe. Then he looked up, straight into Mutuk's

face. Alarm struggled feebly in him and he tried to sit up. But Mutuk laid a big hand on his forehead and pushed him back. And Sisiwa thought he saw kindness in the warrior's eyes.

The villagers on the beach were silent as the canoes approached, but when they ran up on the sands and Sisiwa and his companions stepped out, steadying themselves on the warriors' arms, they began chanting the song of heroes again. The old chief came down on unsteady legs, and met them at the water's edge, with Kiri one step behind. He took Sisiwa's right hand and placed it on Kiri's left. Then he reached forward very slowly, and taking Mutuk's hand, laid it on the other two.

"This is the sign of blood brothers," he said. "Mutuk, the warrior, has saved his brother from the sharks; and Sisiwa, the worker, has saved his brother Mutuk and the village. Let them always be brothers now, and Kiri be Mutuk's sister because she is the woman of Sisiwa."

BUT Nokoto and the warriors were unsmiling, for they knew this was the testing time.

The old chief stood watching Mutuk, trying to hide the anxiety that showed in his eyes.

Then Mutuk smiled and put his other hand on Sisiwa's shoulder. "There is much in you, little brother," he said. "I did not know you for a brave man."

Sisiwa felt the pride swell in him, but banished it as unworthy. "But not as brave as you, big brother," he said. "I have not been in battle."

He felt a tug on his arm and looked down at Kiri. She smiled softly at him and her eyes were wet with tears.

"You are still sick from the noise, Sisiwa," she said. "We all know you for a great warrior."

Pride threatened to overwhelm him then but he fought it back. "It is not right for you, Kiri, to speak out like this before men," he chided, gently. "There can be..."

But what more he had to say was drowned in the shouting of the villagers. Kiri inclined her head submissively, and there was wonder and pride in her eyes. Then two young girls ran down the beach and placed wreaths of palm leaves round their necks. The singing began once more and the villagers stood back to let the old chief pass. They saw he was smiling.

THE END

SEEDS OF DOUBT

Continued from page 18

queer. He said: "Afraid I've got to be late again tonight, dear. I'll get a snack out somewhere and be back about ten. Don't bother about keeping me any food." He rang off almost before she had time to reply.

IT was twenty-five minutes past eight when she emerged from the tube and walked up the steps into Victoria main-line station. She saw John almost at once. He was skulking beside one of the telephone boxes, consulting his watch. There were several people standing about under the clock, but nobody who seemed to answer the description of a scarlet woman. Mrs. Pargeter took refuge behind the door of the waiting-room.

The minutes dragged on. People came and went, but there was no sign of any unattached woman who might be meeting John.

At twenty-five minutes to nine, John came furtively out from the shelter of the telephone kiosk and

sauntered uneasily over towards the clock. His anxious eyes scanned the faces of the passers-by. He did not look at all happy.

Suddenly, Mrs. Pargeter could bear it no longer. After all, John was her husband—so far, her faithful and devoted husband. They had been married for twelve years and she was fond of him. She felt she simply couldn't stand there another second waiting to trap him. She would save him instead—save him from himself and this awful woman—now, this minute, before it was too late. She hurried across the crowded station, jostling her way through the eddying throngs of people, with tears of anxiety and forgiveness brimming up into her faded eyes.

John turned and saw her coming. "You!" they both exclaimed simultaneously.

"But how did you know—" John began.

Breathlessly, Mrs. Pargeter explained about the anonymous letters. She did not attempt to gloss over the fact that her presence at the station

had been actuated primarily from motives of curiosity and revenge; but she did try to make John see that at the last minute she had been unable to go through with it and that she realized that she, too, was at fault.

"John," cried Mrs. Pargeter brokenly. "John—we have always been so happy together! Couldn't we forget all this dreadful misunderstanding—and start again?"

"But, good lord, Edith," Mr. Pargeter was saying, "I had them, too. Addressed to the office. Anonymous letters—about your goings on! And the last one arrived this morning and said if I wanted to catch you red-handed I was to be under the clock at Victoria at eight thirty tonight. So here," he added apologetically, "I am. What on earth—?"

Victoria is some way from Hampstead, but by taking a taxi back, they were just in time to discover Bessie's young man hastily pushing the last case of silver out of the scullery window. He ran like a hare. They saved the silver. But they never saw Bessie again.

THE END

I'll Never Forget last Monday!



I had woken up with a nasty headache and felt a cold coming on.



Sid suggested going out that night. I felt so bad I thought I should have to refuse.



Before I was even half way through my washing I felt absolutely "washed out" myself.



Then I remembered your tip and bought some "YEAST-VITE" Tablets and took two right away.



When Sid came home my headache had gone, my cold was giving way and I felt tons better.



Sid and I had our night out after all, thanks to "YEAST-VITE" Tablets



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Add 2, 3 or 4 Words to any of these "EXAMPLES"

To make a Bullet, add simply TWO, THREE or FOUR words of apt and original comment to any of the Examples below. To use an incomplete Example, first complete it with any one word in place of dotted line—then make your Bullet as usual.

Land Of Hope
Man At The Helm
To Build Prosperity
Jack And Jill
The Four Horsemen
Public Property
Try A Bit Harder And
The Old Magic
Too Soon
Dead As The Dodo
Miles Away
Fragrant Memory
Gets A Bit Tedious
Fool-proof
Jealousy's Poison
Why He Left Her
Grandpa's Horoscope
Made A Splash
Village Wooing
Bats In The Belfry

Incomplete "Examples"—see instructions
The Money We.....
Somewhere To
"You're..... Me!"
.....At The Seaside
Just The Job For.....
.....With A Difference

POST ENTRY

"Bullets" 1,792 (or Xword 744), "John Bull," Long Acre, London, W.C.2 (Comp.)

RULES 1. First Prize for best Bullet received. Others in order of merit—the test is of cleverness, aptness and originality.

2. Editor undertakes that all Bullets received shall be accorded careful consideration by competent Adjudicators.

3. As entry-fee, enclose P.O. or stamps as indicated on coupon. Fee submitted will be taken to cover Bullets in coupon order—any sent in excess will be disqualified. Plain-paper entries are allowed. If using P.O. make payable to JOHN BULL, cross /& Co., write name and address on back. Coupons must not be mutilated. Forces half-rate for Bullets and Crosswords for entry-fee not exceeding 2s. if coupons personally completed and Service rank indicated.

4. Entries accepted by post only and on condition that results of this week's Contests in Bulletin and Gazette, dated August 11 and in JOHN BULL dated August 18, also Editor's decision in any matter of dispute, are accepted as final and legally binding. Odhams' employees (and families) ineligible.

"Bullets" Winners 1,787

FIRST PRIZE, £500 plus Riviera Holiday for Two: A. Baker, 25 Rosary Gardens, London, S.W.7.

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£25 plus Seaside Holiday for Two: W. H. Ford, 2 Cotswold Crescent, Stow-on-the-Wold: EATING UP THE LITTLE—WE'VE "TUCKED AWAY," PRIZES.

£10 plus Seaside Holiday for Two: T. Shaw, 95 New Bank Road, Blackburn: KNOCK IT OR NOT—THE FESTIVAL'S "KNOCKING 'EM"!

OTHER AWARDS: 49: R. S. Morris, 2 West View, Rhos-y-Waen, Chirk, Wrexham: TOM, DICK AND HARRY—USUAL "RUN"—USUALLY "FLOODING." 48: A. L. Hall, 42 Trelander Highway, Truro: WALKING THE PLANK—OF OWN WOODEN-HEADEDNESS, MAN. 47: L. T. Balcombe, 90 Crofton Road, Plaistow, E.13: FLAGS, BANNERS AND—PATCHED SHEETS, WELCOMING VISITORS! 46: R. J. Fletcher, "Fairlyn, Honor Road, Prestwood, Gt. Missenden: STREAM OF ORATORY—FOR UN-INTRODUCED ENGLISHMAN, "WET!" 45: P. H. Lisk, 19 Palmersfield Road, Banstead: WORLD WITHOUT WOMEN—A NICE, QUIET—Pig-styl! 44: C. R. Smithson, 3 Park Square, Knaresborough: FLAGS, BANNERS AND—SALVATILE—ENGLAND'S WON TEST!

For ten winners of £4 see "Bullets" Bulletin.

50 Prizes of £1 and 2,000 "Good Shot" Prizes have also been posted.

RESCUE MAN OF THE CORNISH DEATH TRAPS

Continued from page 19

gesture of scorn that put the more youthful bystanders to shame, says Tom, but the full-throated aria delivered with dramatic aplomb from the lip of the shaft—after his successful return from the depths.

The rescue of bigger animals requires expert handling of a rope. Such rescues are rare from shafts; usually a heifer is found wedged with broken limbs and has to be put out of its misery with a humane killer. When they do occur, the technique is the same as that which Tom uses for rescues from cliff edges. The rope is passed first round the animal's neck, then round the forelegs, crossed on the back, passed under the tail, across the back and knotted again, then finally linked with the neck loop. To heave a half-ton heifer to the surface the rope is slung through a pulley attached to a tripod wedged firmly over the shaft. Then it is a matter of brawn. Thirty-eight men, straining like a tug-of-war team, were needed to haul a horse to safety.

In one remarkable case, a dog survived three months at the bottom of a shaft in one of the wildest corners of Tom's beat. Tunnels ran from the bottom of the shaft, linking it with others. When the dog was first lost Tom descended one or two shafts from which its barking seemed to be coming, but could find nothing. Three months later, he was amazed to hear what seemed like a dog's cry in that area. He found the dog, and the solution. One of the shafts had been used by black-market butchers as a dumping ground for the unwanted portions of illegally slaughtered cattle.

Menace To Humans, Too

Early this year a representative body of West Cornishmen met at Penzance Town Hall to combat the ever growing menace of these "death traps." An executive committee, of which Tom is a member, is now working on the problem. Legal complications as to who is responsible for many of the shafts must be overcome before the most dangerous can be sealed over. The menace is to human beings as well as to animals.

The most horrifying case was of the young man with a charabanc party who disappeared sixty feet down a shaft. His muffled cries were eventually located, and the charabanc drove off in search of help.

"Can you imagine," says Tom, "the feelings of that man before the fire brigade came to his rescue? Not knowing help was on its way, he thought himself abandoned in a pitch-dark pit. When he struck a match he found that round his feet was a solid mass of maggots feeding on the remains of some unfortunate creature, an earlier victim. A dog cannot relate the terrors of entombment, but that man did." THE END

WRITE TO JOHN BULL ABOUT IT

READERS with personal problems can obtain the help of John Bull's team of experts. Inquiries (other than medical) should be addressed to the John Bull Free Advice Service, 189 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. Enclose a stamped, addressed envelope for reply.

CASH AND HOLIDAYS FOR XWORDS!

THIS WAY TO WIN

FIRST complete Square in INK, giving your Answers to Clues below. Then, if you wish to enter one extra Answer to any one, two or three Clues, give each such word in full in "Extra Answer" Form below Crossword Square.

Across Clues XWORD 744

- Can be helpful in international affairs
- One man's plan is not so easy for another man to
- Parson knows that, on occasion, this is the only kind of talk to give
- To which some men with grievances will resort
- Doesn't always look best at end of long drive
- In some cases does something to assist drainage
- Foreman may well put in good this which men under him know nothing whatever about
- When very high, may prove dangerous

Down Clues

- Commonly found on deck of decent-sized ship
- Is sometimes a very useful card
- Don't give your guests this; they won't enjoy it
- Many a man remembers with gratitude the day he was given
- Exercising this is naturally part of a stableboy's duty
- Great many actresses can tell a good one when they've got it
- If cobbler is a really bad one, his customers will normally be this

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"Signpost" Prizes for 2nd Runners-up.

XWORD 739 RESULT

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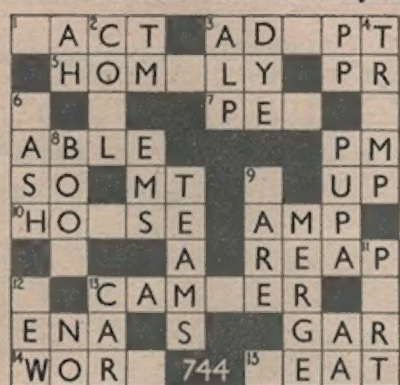
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In adjudication, all Extra Answers will be read in combination with each other and with all Answers in your Square. Thus your completed Square with one extra Answer to one Clue will represent two full Squares (Entry-fee 6d.). Square with one extra Answer to two Clues will represent four full Squares (Entry-fee 1s.) and Square with one extra Answer to three Clues will represent eight full Squares (Entry-fee 2s.). Use ink not pencil.

Single Square with 6d. P.O. or stamps covers dispatch to you of Crossword Gazette dated August 4.

Winner—sender of most meritorious set of Answers received—decided by Adjudication Committee on basis of aptness and accuracy. Ties divide. Entrants limited to one prize per Contest and to entry requiring not more than 4s. entry-fee. Signature indicates agreement to Rules.



CLUE	EXTRA ANSWER	Total Fee
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